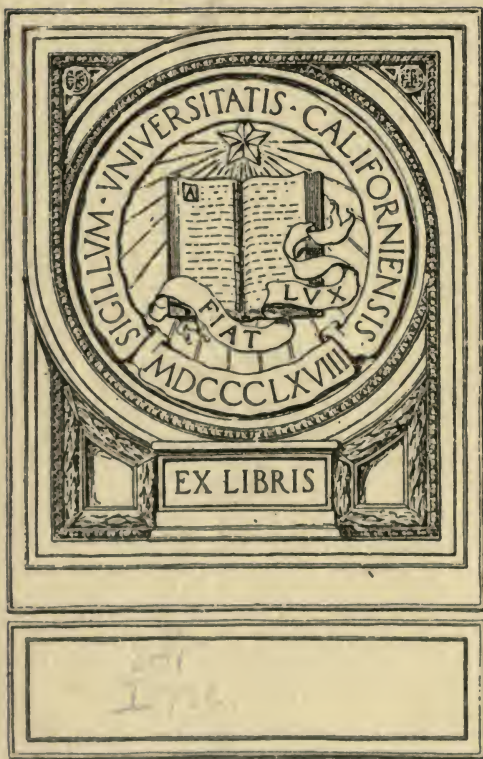


A THEORY OF CIVILISATION

BY SHOLTO O. G. DOUGLAS



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SHOLTO O. G. DOUGLAS

THE
MACMILLAN COMPANY

NEW YORK
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A Theory of Civilisation

INTRODUCTION

WHY did the civilisation of ancient Greece and Rome decay and die? That is a question which must occur to every mind that studies the history of classical civilisation. Why did that former period of knowledge and culture, of vast intellectual and artistic achievement, fail to pass by a direct path of ascent into our modern civilisation? We know that there were intellects at work in the world then which were not separated by any real gulf of difference from the intellects that have crowned our modern civilisation. In every purely intellectual point the great men of that period were not inferior to the great men of modern times—or, at any rate, were not utterly inferior to them. In poetry—epic, lyric, dramatic—Greece and Rome have left us models which we have barely surpassed. In sculpture we have never reached

the perfection of Greece. Of classical painting we possess next to nothing, and we know so little that it would be rash to claim for the modern world an overwhelming superiority of craftsmanship. In architecture we may look proudly on Chartres or Ely ; but, with thoughts of the Parthenon and of the temples of Paestum, we dare not claim an intrinsic superiority for Christian architecture. And even in the latter days of the great epoch of Greco-Roman civilisation, Tacitus, that most perfect craftsman of prose literature, gave the world in his *Annals* a work that some of us may well think has never been equalled.

Why did this civilisation collapse utterly, as though the superstructure was too heavy for the foundation?

The advancing waves of barbarism, we are told, broke through the barriers, and spread like a rising tide of savagery over the Roman world. Yes, but why did that happen at this period? Have we any real reason—a reason, that is, that we have not reached *ex post facto*—for supposing that barbarian Power was greater in the fourth and following centuries of our era than in the hundred years that centre round the principate of Augustus? We read of the irresistible stream of immigration pour-

ing in from the east, and beating upon the barriers of the Empire. Yet the Byzantine Empire, which might seem to have been more at the mercy of the barbarians, succeeded in keeping a tottering head above the waves for yet another thousand years. Indeed, every reader knows that this is not a sufficient and convincing answer. We all know that Roman civilisation was rotten to the core; that the evil came from within, not from without; that the Roman world was weakening all the time, and could at last do nothing against barbarians whom Caesar and his legions would have swept away like chaff.

It has been the same with every civilisation that has been evolved in the countless ages of written and unwritten history. Greece and Rome only followed in the tracks of Nineveh and Babylon. Does the same fate lie before us in spite of the seeming strength and solidarity of the civilisation that to-day is encompassing all the world? No doubt, to any unimportant provincial governor of classical Rome, the idea that Roman civilisation could pass away, and melt into the barbarism which we find, say, in the seventh century would have seemed preposterous; in just the same way it would seem preposterous to a modern colonial

governor that the totality of modern civilisation could fade within a few centuries into a soulless, unproductive savagery. Yet that is what happened to Rome, and that is what analogy tells us may happen to our own culture.

Now can we form any notion—however tentative and falsified by misconception—why all the earlier civilisations have thus passed away, leaving only dead sepulchral fruits for antiquarian scholars of a later age? The answer to that question must be of interest to us, because from it we may hope to see whether the same forces of dissolution are working amongst us which dissolved those earlier civilisations.

But the question cannot be answered in a few words of conclusive demonstration. If that were so, the answer would have been found, studied, discussed long ago in all its endless ramifications by the great intellects that have preceded us. For no philosopher, no biologist, no anthropologist could have failed to take an interest in the road up which mankind is toiling.

If we look with a pervasive eye at the history of the European world during the last two thousand years, three things appear to stand

out as the central pivots round which the individual events may be grouped conveniently.

First, the spread of the Greco-Roman power and civilisation, which, after reaching a climax, fell into decrepitude and death.

Second, the birth, growth, and ultimate dissemination of the Christian faith.

Third, that renewal of civilisation whose commencement has by common consent been called the Renaissance: the term, of course, implies rightly or wrongly that our modern civilisation is essentially a re-birth of the Greco-Roman civilisation.

Let us try to see whether any causal connection can be traced between these three leading events.

It is at once obvious that the birth and growth of Christianity synchronise to a remarkable degree with the climacteric point and the beginning of the decay of the Roman empire.

We must be careful here not to let the wide range of our modern point of view mislead us. We have all heard in our childhood that Christ came into the world exactly at the moment when the events of Roman history were most singularly favourable to the dissemination of the Christian faith. That is true. But, looking at this statement with the un-

prejudiced eye of logic, we can see that it is also possible to express the same truth from the other side, and say that when events became ripe for the promulgation of a new religion, a new religion arose which we happen to know by the name of Christianity. It seems easier to accept the latter statement, which is rational, than the former, which is ultra-rational. Darwinian philosophy has shown us that secular change is the necessary concomitant of individual life ; for every individual, from the highest man to the lowest zoophyte, varies from every other individual, and the resultant of countless variations must itself vary.

Perhaps we may say that a higher type, therefore, necessarily continues to come into existence *in aeternum*. Changes in temperature, in humidity, in the composition of the atmosphere, are so gradual from day to day, from year to year, from century to century, from aeon to aeon, that it may be that some type of life will evolve itself to meet the most extreme conditions that we can imagine : but such speculations must remain purely hypothetical for us. Coming back to that which concerns humanity more closely, let us try to see what it is that marks out the man of the

first century—or of the twentieth century—from the man of the seventh century. The distinction, to which attention especially is called here, is the loss of religious faith. It is clear from the literature of the first century that then Rome no longer possessed the old faith in the old gods of Olympus. The Romans no longer possessed the psychic illusion of their ancestors. The result of this loss was a slackening of the obligations of morality. The man who in earlier days had faith in the reality of the Olympian hierarchy necessarily was guided in his conduct by that faith; and, so far as that Olympian faith taught a higher morality than that of obedience to physical appetite, thus far the gods of Olympus guided the individual believer in them to take his stand upon a higher plane; and so we are not incorrect in using the expression analogically that the soul of Rome was of a higher nature than the soul of Gaul or Britain.

Is it not this psychic illusion which distinguishes the progressive nation from that which we call the unprogressive—unprogressive by comparison, that is—because any progress that may be taking place in its development is so slow that we cannot trace its effects in historical action? As the loss of

this psychic illusion synchronises sufficiently closely with the apparent decay of Roman civilisation, we may accept the conclusion, not as proved but as probable, that the loss of faith was connected in some way with the failure of progress.

With a decay of faith in the verity of the Olympian myths the Roman lost the guiding principle which had led him to stand upon a higher plane than his barbarous neighbours. There is no question here of claiming any supernatural spiritual truth for the myths of Greece and Rome: it is a mere statement of a materialistic evolutionary theory. With the loss of his psychic illusion each individual, in his own conduct, acted under influences of physical appetite, which were in no way superior to the influences that worked upon the neighbouring barbarian; indeed, frequently the Roman was under inferior influences, because, where the Roman had lost his old faith, and had no new faith to take its place, the barbarian had for the most part some psychic illusion, which, however inferior to the Olympian verities, was, at any rate, superior to the nullity of the new Roman atheism or agnosticism.

Now, if there is any truth underlying these

theoretical possibilities, before any group of human beings could rise from the dust and ashes of the dead Roman civilisation to a plane equal in height to that of the old civilisation, it was necessary for the soul of that group to find faith in some psychic illusion which could give the individual as high a guidance as the old Olympian belief. The potentialities of such faith and of such psychic illusion existed then, as at other times, in the countless superstitions of uncivilised humanity.

To use a convenient, but unscientific, analogy, the spirit of evolution had only to choose the best of these multitudinous superstitions and to educate it to play its part in the upward development of man. Evolution was capable of making the choice. It had to choose, not merely that which was best *per se*, but that which was best relatively to the possibilities of its dissemination as far and as widely as might be, and especially with reference to the possibilities of working up the best material to be found in the world; and this material lay in the old empire of Rome, because Rome under the old Olympian dispensation had risen to a height never reached elsewhere, and that had left in the brain-material of the inhabitants the potentiality of a superior and speedier growth.

No doubt evolution made trial of many faiths before it found that which it sought, just as evolution may be said to make many trials before it finds the desirable variation in the animal that will lead to a higher species. It found the desirable faith in Judaea. From the almost elementary facts of the life of Christ was evolved the fabric of mediaeval Christianity. In this new faith mankind found the new psychic illusion, which could take the place of the dead or moribund Olympian fables.

But it was long before the descendants of the men of the outworn Roman world reached that lowly, unsophisticated condition of mind in which they could accept generally and unreservedly the new psychic illusion. It was not till about three centuries after the death of Christ that the world found a Christian emperor in Constantine. And even then there were still sparks glowing in the embers ; Julian the Apostate, for instance, vainly sought to reinstate Olympian paganism.

The new faith differed from the old in being essentially monotheistic ; to this extent it was possible for a thinking mind to accept the notion of a Christian theocracy. But meanwhile the disruption of the Roman autocracy over Europe and the neighbouring shores of

the Mediterranean had let in the barbaric invaders. Goths and Mongols swelled the ranks of the sons of Romulus, and united themselves by the closest ties to the patrician families of Rome. So Roman intellectuality sank lower as the last tatters of the Olympian civilisation were disintegrated to dust, while the dawn of the new faith was beginning to spread its light upon mankind.

Our fathers were not deep thinkers in the Dark Ages, the ages of faith ; that is why they were ages of faith ; that is why the new psychic illusion came to dominate European humanity. As the work of construction tends always to be slower than the work of destruction, the work of reconstructing the Roman civilisation was a slower process than its dissolution. The accession of Hildebrand to the papacy sometimes is taken as a convenient date from which to count the birth of the modern world ; but it is only in the thirteenth century that we can trace with unhesitating certainty the arrival of the new civilisation, the Christian civilisation, which was soon to prove more glorious than the Olympian civilisation of earlier days.

It was fitting, perhaps we may say inevitable, that the Christian civilisation should first

come into prominence in Italy, the old home of its precursor, rather than in Judaea, the land of its birth, for—on the principle that a prophet is not without honour save in his own country—the Jews saw too much of the real Christ to accept His divinity ; it was only at a distance from the historical home of its founder that the great psychic illusion could find its necessary environment. And Judaea was farther from Rome then than it is now ; and the distance continued to increase as the means of communication became less efficient with the decrease of civilisation.

After its long period of re-educating mankind the Christian faith brought forth the new civilisation in the glories of the Renaissance. In Italy this brilliant epoch of the human soul reached its meridian splendour in the times of Lorenzo the Magnificent and Leo X. During the papacy of Clement VII we see the swiftly rising shades of a coming darkness. But outside Italy events had marched more slowly. We may take the death of Shakespeare, in 1616, as marking the commencement of the decline in England.

Then an interesting state of affairs arises ; for the decline is not continuous. Christian civilisation does not sink down again into the

depths. On the contrary, after a comparatively brief period of decay it commences to rise again, and reaches that gorgeous point in which we find ourselves living at the beginning of the twentieth century,

At the first glance this might seem to kill the theory of the causes of civilisation, which it is the purpose of this book to explain. But that is not so, for a very little thought shows us that at the moment when the first Christian civilisation, the Catholic civilisation, was in all the glory of its zenith, a new form of psychic illusion, which alone could regenerate mankind, already was advancing to a prominent position in the thoughts of men. Protestantism was evolving itself into the new religion that was, by its new illusion, to lead humanity to higher heights than ever had been reached before. The Protestant civilisation, for reasons that we need not here discuss, took a scientific and mechanical turn. We need not suppose that contemporary mechanical ingenuity points to any superiority in contemporary brains over those of earlier civilised men. It would be, indeed, absurd to imagine that the men who appreciated Plato's *Republic* when it was first written were so stupid that some of them could not have been taught easily to run a motor-car

or a printing-machine. But the mechanical bias of Protestant civilisation had an interesting and important result in its application to locomotion, for this caused a vast extension of its power of influence. It caused the Protestant civilisation to react with powerful effect upon the neighbouring moribund Catholic civilisation and ultimately on the non-Christian communities, which otherwise would have been beyond its reach.

The spirit of toleration has been in theory—though not, of course, always in practice—a distinctive characteristic of the Protestant rather than of the Catholic civilisation. And this, also, has led undoubtedly to an increase in its influence upon peoples external to it.

It is of interest to note the results of the Catholic and Protestant civilisation in the settlement of America. The old moribund Catholic civilisation was planted throughout the Southern continent: the young, invigorating Protestant civilisation came to dominate the North. The natural advantages of the two continents are not very dissimilar; the coast-lines correspond; the river systems of both are extensive; both extend practically from equatorial to polar regions. So we can continue to draw parallels until we study the

political history of the inhabitants. There the contrast is conclusive. And why? Surely because the minds of the men who colonised the North were, for the most part, under the influence of the Protestant psychic illusion, the men of the Southern continent were under the influence of the decadent Catholicism.

And now we may turn to the question of the immediate future, a most interesting question at all times, to all men. To what goal are we marching with the march of civilisation? Are we indeed ascending or descending?

In answering that question we must be closely on our guard against forming grand conclusions upon trivial and transient phenomena. Imagine a straw floating on the surface of the open sea while the tide is ebbing on a rough day. The straw rises again and again on countless waves, although it is still falling with the falling tide, and must descend inevitably to whatever level the water finally reaches. If that straw could think and speak, we may suppose that it would tell us, as it climbed some huge wave, that it was ascending, and would arrive ultimately at some unseen, unknown goal on high. It might well seem so to the straw, yet it would not be so in fact. Now we are in the position of that straw. We, as indi-

viduals, have no more effect on the trend of things, on the tide of human progress, than that straw.

It has been suggested tentatively above that civilisation always has been connected inseparably with some antecedent psychic illusion ; it is further suggested that this is an inevitable law of the existence of civilisation. Thus civilisation only exists as the resultant of faith. From this it follows that the decay of faith leads to the decay of civilisation—that civilisation must fade, and die, and decay, if faith has previously faded, and died, and decayed.

And so the all-important question for the prophet of the outcome of Christian civilisation is this : Is Christianity a living and growing faith, or is Christianity a system of extraordinary historic interest with regard to which men's faith is moribund, which all men will be content soon to class as a mere psychic illusion ?

It would seem that our civilisation, too, must fade and fall. The size of our civilisation may make the dissolution slow, slower than that of the Olympian civilisation.

The prophecy of dates is a most fantastic hypothesis. But perhaps we may picture our descendants of A.D. 3000 as down in

such depths as the sons of Rome reached in A.D. 1000. Then somewhere in the world the new psychic illusion must rise to power. Its coming is certain, because only from it can follow the new civilisation. And that new civilisation must come, as the result of those evolutionary laws which are older far than humanity itself. It is as inevitable as tomorrow's sunrise. To what height man ultimately may climb, in the illimitable vistas of endless civilisations following endless and ever higher psychic illusions, we cannot even faintly imagine in our wildest dreams.

The theory, then, which this book seeks to elucidate, of the causation of civilisation and decivilisation, amounts to something of this sort.

We will take as an accepted fact that, in the course of long ages, the almost primitive human animal has evolved for itself a certain degree of intelligence. With that intelligence comes a certain fear of the unseen, of the unknown, of inexplicable things: man comes to dread the thunder, the great winds and storms which so often bring discomfort, scarcity of food, death. He comes, too, to have apprehension of the unseen power of the dead, of the continuance of the authority of some

dead leader. The individual, or the community, in whom such thoughts and fears are prevalent, is influenced in conduct by them.

Here we have, then, a primitive psychic illusion. These influences may tend towards conduct which we now call superior, or they may tend towards conduct which we would now call inferior. Perhaps we may say that they would almost always tend in the former direction, and that for two reasons: firstly, because superiority of conduct would seem really to be only the name which we give to such conduct as these primitive ancestors of ours were led to pursue; secondly, so far as there is reality in the superiority of a superior morality, so far there would always be a tendency towards the elimination of the inferior morality on the principle of the survival of the fittest. Ultimately, then, under either alternative the outcome would tend to be always the survival of the superior morality.

This superior morality would react hygienically both upon the individual and also, similarly, upon the community collectively, tending towards a higher grade of intelligence; this implies also a higher standard of civilisation—if we use the word “civilisation” analogically to include the primitive advance towards

the condition which we in later times can classify definitely as civilisation. This superior condition of relatively intelligent civilisation would be necessarily subsequent to the spread of a psychic illusion, and actually resultant from it.

But the increase of intelligent reflection would then lead to disillusion—that is, to the decay of faith in the psychic illusion. Thus the increase of civilisation would lead to the decay of that which inspired the increase of civilisation. This would seem to bring us back again to the starting-point.

The position, however, would not be the same, although it would appear to be superficially similar. The difference would be in the potentiality of increased intelligence, which, by heredity, would be existent in the brains of the men who composed the community. This would be true whether we believe that evolution had worked directly upon the mental capacity of individuals or indirectly by the elimination of inferior individuals or communities. So, when a new psychic illusion began to operate upon men, it would find, so to speak, its work easier; and therefore in an equal space of time, it would tend to lead to a higher state of civilisation than the resultant of the

previous illusion. Consequently there would be a tendency for a new civilisation to be on a higher plane than its parent civilisation.

The collateral ramifications of the ascent of civilisation are so complex that we need feel no surprise when historical facts do not appear to tally exactly with the theoretical or ideal line of progress. But, as it happens, in our Western Civilisation—to use Kidd's well-known, but not too happy, nomenclature—we have a very normal example of this ideal progression. This is one reason why it is useful to make a special study of this Western Civilisation. Another reason is that here in England we are apt to know more of the psychic illusion under which we were born and bred, and also of the history of the civilisation in which we live.

So it is proposed now to enter in some detail into the consideration of the two psychic illusions which in the main have civilised Europe—the Olympian illusion and the Christian illusion—and with them to consider the evolution of the two resultant civilisations to which reference has been made already as the Olympian civilisation and the Christian civilisation. To this will be added a few chapters explanatory of the connection between some other

forms of psychic illusion and civilisation ; these, it is hoped, will illustrate the more detailed considerations of Roman and Christian civilisation.

PART I

CHAPTER I

ANCIENT GREECE

IN this book an attempt is made to trace the causes that have produced civilisation. It is evident that these causes must lie ultimately beyond the range of history, for, however far back we may trace the beginnings of that progress by which men have advanced from a primitive barbarism to a condition which by analogy we may call incipient civilisation, we can never find a state of human affairs which was not the resultant of a previous state of affairs. Thus we are compelled in our ignorance to choose by an artificial convention some definite period as a beginning, although we are well aware that the period chosen is not a real beginning in a philosophic sense of the word.

It is clear enough that the civilisation in which we are living to-day may be traced back through the period of the Renaissance and the

Middle Ages to the Roman Empire. From Rome we may pass to Greece and the culture which seems to be allied so closely to that of Rome. So far, if we are content with wide generalities, there is no difficulty.

But when we try to see what lay before the Greek civilisation the task is not so easy, the outlook is not so clear. In Egypt, in Phoenicia, in the various old civilisations of Asia we seem, indeed, to see a light that may guide us to a true knowledge of the parentage of Greek culture; but it is a vague, uncertain light, and soon is lost in darkness and doubt. We must, then, be content to say artificially that our civilisation begins on the shores of the Aegean, not because we believe that this is a true beginning but because it is in Greece that European civilisation certainly has its most primitive historical source.

So many learned books have been written about Greek civilisation and Greek religion that it must seem presumptuous for a writer who assuredly is far from learned to step boldly towards a gap that was filled up long ago. Yet there are still a few points that seem to be deserving of a greater emphasis than usually has been laid upon them.

Greek religion may be considered under two

aspects, the mythological and the eschato-logical. About Greek mythology there is nothing new to be said save by the most expert scholars, for, since the time of the revival of learning in the Italian Renaissance, there has been no lack of poets and students to keep the memories of the myths of Hellas fresh and vivid. But the eschatological problems have been considered with vigour only in our own day. It is just these latter problems that have the chief interest for us in our consideration of the causes of the evolution of Greek civilisation.

As we glance over the course of early Greek history we may note one or two points which stand out with special distinction. We see that at some period not far distant from B.C. 1000 there were in existence several important cities in Greece Proper, of which Mycenae is the most prominent. These were in a fairly advanced condition of civilisation. There was, also, in existence an important city, Ilium or Troy, in the north-west corner of Asia Minor, in a somewhat similar condition of civilisation.

At some date certainly earlier than 700 B.C., probably earlier than 800 B.C., were composed the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, poems to which

reference may be made as "Homer," by the usual convention, without any implications as to their authorship. Homer entirely is concerned with the Trojan War and events that resulted from it.

With Homer the literature of Greece commences: with him we connect closely the Homeric Hymns and the poems of Hesiod. But after these Greek literature practically is silent until we come to the time of Simonides (b. 556) and Anacreon (fl. 530); Alcaeus and Sappho may be a little earlier, but their work has come down to us in a quite fragmentary condition. It is only with Pindar (b. *circ.* 522), Aeschylus (b. 525), and Herodotus (b. 484) that we come to the full glory of Greek literature. These few obvious facts with regard to early Greek literature are given here because it seems that frequently too little stress is laid on the occurrence of this silent period, between the finished artistic workmanship of Homer, on the one hand, and the equally artistic, but very different, work of the fifth century, on the other. Greek literature is treated as a simple identity, as though there was no difficulty at all in the fact that Homer and Hesiod could write with artistic finish, but that no worthy suc-

cessors appeared to carry on the Homeric tradition until, about three centuries later, the very diverse, and in some ways more archaic, Aeschylus gave to the world his consummate tragedies, whose beauty and grandeur fill us with wonder, while their exasperating difficulty fills us—or some of us—with despair.

Now it appears fairly obvious that the Homeric poems somehow are connected with that older Mycenaean civilisation (we might call it also Pelasgian: it is said to form a bond of union between Neolithic times and our own civilisation) which in the main had passed away before the historic Hellas, with Athens as its chief glory, is revealed to us. The Mycenaean is not the same as the Achaeans of Homer—Professor Ramsay has shown this clearly in his *Early Age of Greece*. At what period and under what circumstances the Mycenaean combined with the Achaeans to form a Mycenaean-Achaean civilisation we do not know for certain. But apparently it was such a combination that under Agamemnon fought in the Trojan war.

It seems desirable to lay considerable emphasis on the existence of a gap between the civilisation of Homer and the civilisation of the fifth century, between Homeric litera-

ture and Athenian literature; for by means of it we may come, perhaps, to a philosophic, generalised notion of the early history of these peoples round the Aegean Sea.

We picture to ourselves, then, a civilisation growing up in Argolis and the Troad, which produced ultimately, as its chief literary fruit, the poems of Homer. It produced also, no doubt, other poetic fruits that are lost—lost through the quite normal progress of this early civilisation into decadence. We can see clearly that some poems might be preserved, unwritten, by rhapsodists, through a time when the civilisation that had produced them was decaying round them. As we shall see in a subsequent chapter when we are considering an analogous condition of affairs, even the complete decay of a civilisation would not bring the people who formed the population of the country into a position exactly similar to that which their ancestors occupied before the rise of the civilisation; for they would bear now within them, through heredity, the potentiality of an increased degree of intellectuality. Thus, if an exciting stimulus, even of equal strength, could be brought to bear upon them, it would be likely to goad them to a height of civilisation to which their ancestors had not attained.

Leaving aside for the moment the nature of this stimulus, let us think of the way it would work, of the effects it would produce. We would expect it to come into operation somewhere on the outskirts of the previous civilisation, so as not to be cut off entirely from its civilising influence, and yet not to be involved fully in its disillusionment and decadence. Athens occupies such a position with regard to the Mycenaean-Achaean civilisation. In Homer Athens is of no importance at all; it is only in the later period of the fifth century that she appears as the leading city of Greece in point of civilisation.

Historically, the stimulus that at length produced the new period of Greek culture was, perhaps, the Dorian invasion. The Dorians, again, were a northern people, and, no doubt, akin in language and religion to the Achaeans of the earlier inroad. If their coming was the exciting cause of the new civilisation, it was quite normal that the new civilisation in the end should flourish rather in a people in close touch with the descendants of the previous Mycenaean-Achaeans, who, as has been said, held within them the potentiality of a greater intellectuality through the former civilisation of their ancestors.

According to the theory outlined in the Introduction, it is evident that we must presume that there was some considerable break in the religious history of the inhabitants of Greece, that one form of religion was the cause of the Mycenaean-Achaean civilisation, that this gave place to another form of religious belief which produced the Athenian civilisation—it may be called Athenian for the sake of convenience, although, of course, Athens was only the leading city in a civilisation that, in the end, involved the whole of the Greek world.

Now we cannot say roundly that the Athenian religion was not the same thing as the Homeric religion; for the Homeric pantheon very largely is made up of the same deities that were also so prominent in the later historic period; Zeus is king of the gods in both, Hera is his wife, and so on. But there are points of difference, points of distinction that demand our close attention. Of these the most remarkable is that Dionysus is not a prominent figure in Homer, whereas he is a very prominent figure indeed in the historic pantheon, and actually figures more conspicuously in the Athenian religious calendar than Zeus, or Apollo, or even Athena. Demeter, again, is an unimportant character in Homer,

and, primordial though she seems, her personality is much less fully developed than that of other goddesses whose names are so familiar. Hermes, also, occupies a secondary position in Homer ; but he becomes continually more influential towards the historic period, until, in the final days of Greek culture, no deity is invoked and worshipped more constantly. Apollo is another god that grew in importance in the interval between Homer and the fifth century. In Homer he is on the Trojan side, and only becomes truly Hellenic at a comparatively late date. On the other hand, Hera is the greatest of all the goddesses in Homeric times, whipping Artemis with her own bowstring, and jeering for ever at Aphrodite ; but in the fifth century the worship of Hera by no means is very conspicuous.

Now with these facts in our heads let us look once again at the course of Greek civilisation, and take first the causes of the Mycenaean-Achaean civilisation. We have no contemporaneous information of the religious beliefs that may have produced this civilisation : we can ground our notions only upon the Homeric and Hesiodic poems, that were themselves a fruit of that civilisation ; and Homer only comes to us in the form in which

finally he was put together at Athens in the time of Pisistratus (b. 528); we are far from having any guarantee that Homer, as we read him, is literally Homer as he was composed. In poems handed down by word of mouth changes are made easily; and such changes as brought Homeric theology into less flagrant contradiction with the current theology are just the changes that most obviously could be made before the time of the final Pisistratan edition. Still, we have no choice but to take the Homeric theology of the *Iliad* as a statement of the religious beliefs prevalent in the Mycenaean-Achaean civilisation.

But even so we have not any clear notion of the religious causes that may have produced that civilisation; for the beliefs current during the height of that civilisation, as we see them in Homer, may have varied enormously from their primitive significance, all the more because Greek religion throughout is a natural religion—not a positive religion like Islam—and, therefore, is particularly apt to vary. Indeed, the Hellenic pantheon as a whole varies, even through the historic period, in a constantly quivering kaleidoscopic rearrangement of its parts. Thus Zeus, who, in fact, does occupy the most stable position, is worshipped under the most diverse forms.

Homer and Hesiod, according to the well-known passage of Herodotus (bk. ii. c. 53), composed the Greek pantheon: that is to say, they crystallised the religious beliefs current in their times. At a quite early date in the Athenian civilisation Homer became the familiar textbook of Greek education; thus every Greek of any pretensions to education was familiar with the theology to be found in Homer—it was not uncommon for a well-educated Athenian to be able to repeat by heart the whole forty-eight books of Homer. This constant study of Homer must have tended to prevent the religious beliefs of the fifth century from developing into a condition in which they contradicted the Homeric canon too directly. The position may be stated thus: Down to the time of the Pisistratan edition of Homer—there were similarly composed editions in many other cities besides Athens—there was a tendency, on the one hand, for the text of Homer to be altered into agreement with the theology of the fifth century; on the other hand, after the Pisistratan edition had stereotyped the text, there was a tendency for the theology of the fifth century not to deviate completely from the Homeric model. Thus the Homeric theology, as we may study

it now, is perhaps a mean between the lost Mycenaean-Achaean faith and the historic Athenian faith. It is in this way that explanation may be found for the unexpected fact that, while the Homeric religion appears superficially to be not dissimilar to the later Hellenic religion, the resultant civilisations differ so widely.

And yet, as we observed above, there are important points of difference between the Homeric pantheon and the Athenian pantheon. Dionysus in Homer is not an Olympian deity at all. Homer knows merely the story of Lycurgus and Dionysus given in the sixth book of the *Iliad*. Though Dionysus appears in an early list of the gods (found in an inscription at Olympia), for the ordinary Athenian he was hardly Olympian. He had existed, no doubt, before Homeric times as a local god, and seems to have come into Greece from the north; for in Thrace, under the title of Sabazios, he had been "from early times the object of an enthusiastic cultus, celebrated with wild orgies and excesses of every kind."

But, besides the Thracian Sabazios, there is a second southern source, from which the Greek Dionysus also is sprung, in the Cretan Zagreus. These two somewhat diverse divini-

ties are connected with each other as vine-gods. In his Cretan aspect there can be no doubt that Dionysus is a variant of the Egyptian Osiris. Now through Osiris Dionysus is a deity of personal immortality, and in this he is quite unlike the ordinary Olympian deities, who were most mundane, and gave no promise of life after death. Dionysus, by being torn to pieces in Thrace and coming back to life, does hold out such a hope to his worshippers. And the psychic illusion of immortality, as we shall see later, has an important civilising purpose.

Dionysus appears to be one of the most important civilising factors in the culture of the fifth century. There is a tendency for us to think of Dionysus as a deteriorating agent, unworthy of the pure aesthetic appreciation that is so characteristically Greek, as though he were a sort of excuse for excessive drunkenness and sottish sensuality. But really nothing could be much farther from the truth. In the first place, Greek wine was not strong; also, it was diluted almost always with water before being drunk; its effect was not to make men brutal and coarse: on the contrary, "it cleared the mind, and diminished for the time the presence of the body." Dionysus, far from

being the god of heavy debauchery, was one "who set the soul free from the prison of the flesh," to use the expression of the Dionysiac votaries. (*Gardner and Jevons: Manual of Greek Antiquities*, book iii. chap. iv.)

It was the influence of Zagreus-Osiris that was predominant rather than that of the somewhat beery Sabazios.

Thus Dionysus led men to rise above the ordinary worries of daily life, and to turn from them not to mere revelry, but to the highest intellectual pleasures; for it is to the Athenian Dionysia that we trace the source of tragedy and comedy, and an Attic tragedy is no mere entertainment to pass away a few idle hours; its appreciation demands from us—and must have demanded from its first hearers—a strenuous intellectual alertness. Dionysus, apparently, was evolved to no small extent in order to stimulate the intellectuality of those who believed in him.

We can see that it was desirable that psychic illusion in such a deity should stand, for the men of the fifth century, to some extent apart from the earlier stereotyped Homeric pantheon, because it could be developed thus on its own special lines without clashing discordantly with the Homeric mythology. So at Athens it is

Dionysus, rather than Apollo, who is the true culture-deity. We may see a similar purpose and effect of the Dionysiac cult in the fact that it was Dionysus who inspired such symposia as we read of so often in Athenian literature. In the best period these were not mere drinking parties, but rather gatherings at which subjects of the highest moral and philosophic interest were discussed.

It is very difficult for us to put any reality into our conception of Dionysus, largely, it seems, because our thoughts are distorted by perverse Roman notions of Bacchus. We figure to ourselves, perhaps, some corpulent and very human old fellow, with a bottle or a wine-skin, at the head of a rout of drunken satyrs. Such a conception is false entirely to the civilising Dionysiac cult of the fifth century. Rather he is "a young, blooming, and aggressive deity, everywhere invading, and always in the end triumphant" (*Gardner and Jevons*, book ii. chap. vi). He is the ever-youthful mentality which so well may typify all that is "Greek and gracious." He is the young intelligence that leaps from hill to hill over the valleys of difficulty, and knows by intuition what is aesthetically right.

A variation of the Dionysiac cult, a further

aspect of it, is to be seen in Orphism. In this we find marks of a belief that is of profound interest. Orpheus was not merely a great musician of Thrace; to the Orphist he was much more: he was the man who had gone down alive to the lower world of shadows to look for his lost Eurydice, and had come back again to teach men a lesson of hope. It is this return of Orpheus from Hades, with the trust it gave of a similar return for his followers, that made Orphism so popular.

It is of great interest to note in our consideration of the Dionysiac cult that, whereas the old Homeric deities are all local, tribal, all taking sides in that half-mythical Trojan war, Dionysus is not tied down by any such restrictions. Dionysus is universal. Any person, male or female, bond or free, Athenian or Spartan, might join a Dionysiac *θίασος*. They had only to pass quite a simple test, that they were *ἄγνοι*, *εὐσεβείς*, and *ἀγαθοί*—if we translate the words we may connote all sorts of implications that would be foreign to Greek thought. It is said that the “purity,” “piety,” and “goodness” were not exactly of a moral kind. But of what kind were they then? It seems almost perverse to say that they were simply ceremonial: finally the words

became so, no doubt, but originally they must have had surely some moral significance—not necessarily the same as is implied in our obvious translations—so that the Dionysiac psychic illusion must have tended originally to foster some particularity of moral—or immoral, but not non-moral—sentiment. The nature of that particularity we are not able to define exactly, but its existence appears indubitable.

The essential purification thus connects again the Dionysiac cult with the Egyptian Osirianism and “the ultimate escape from evil by renewed purgation.” Such a notion was quite alien to the Olympian faith, so that here we see that Dionysus brought an entirely new principle to bear upon the evolution of Greek civilisation, a conception of godhood that was unknown to Homer. This principle, it seems, was strong enough, in combination with the renewed, revised Olympian faith, to produce a civilisation in the fifth century that was quite another thing from the Mycenaean-Achaean resultant of the older Homeric faith.

That the Dionysiac cult was widespread throughout the Athenian world is certain. Every Athenian, to some extent, was a votary of Dionysus ; for the Dionysiac festivals, along with the Greater and Lesser Panathenaea, and

the Eleusinian Mysteries, were the most important recurring events of Attic life. Now in several respects the *thiasi* were precursors of Christianity, and opened the door by which it entered (*Gardner and Jevons*, book iii. chap. iv.), for they were universal in their scope, and in no way peculiarly Athenian ; and this is one of the points in which they differ so markedly from the Athenaic festivals, whose special function it was to encourage Athenian patriotism.

The psychic illusion in the existence of Athena was evolved in accordance with our theory into its final Athenian prominence more particularly for the purpose of emphasising the patriotic sentiments of the Athenians. The goddess Athena became, indeed, the "mythological embodiment" of the city of Athens. The culminating point of the Panathenaea was the procession which conveyed the Arrephoric robe into the presence of the archaic wooden statue of the goddess. The chief point to be noticed with regard to this ceremony is that it fostered the illusion that the city in some peculiar way was the object of a divine interest and affection. It was a specially local illusion, in which the outsider had no lot or part. We can see easily enough that faith in the psychic

illusion of Athena, the divine ally and protectress, by its very narrowness and concentration, must have been peculiarly inspiring to the citizens of Athens, have led them to act in such a way as tended to the glorification of Athens. The glorification of Athens was an object for which evolution could work, exactly as, in the biological analogy, it works for the "glorification" of the species through the advance of the individual. Ultimately evolution, both politically and biologically, may be working for the individual, but practically it is working for the State and the species. And thus, then, we see that evolution would foster in the individual the psychic illusion in the reality of Athena, because that illusion tended to the advancement of Athens. In more general terms this psychic illusion tended towards the increase of civilisation.

The scope of the illusion here became, in the end, remarkably limited, and therefore the explanation seems to be so facile that at first one is half inclined to doubt the veracity of it. But the explanation of truth is apt to be facile when it is correct—one notices that in the greatest triumphs of scientific generalisation—and therefore may be correct although it is facile.

Looking in a broader spirit at the Athenian civilisation, we can see, then, two great factors at work, two waves, as it were, of civilising influence generated by the psychic illusions in the divinity of Dionysus and in the divinity of Athena ; the former is a universal influence, the latter is intensely local. When the Dionysiac wave, spreading over the greater part of Greece, crosses the path of the narrow, but lofty, Athenaic wave, advancing obliquely on a course by no means parallel to that of the Dionysiac wave, we find the highest level reached by civilisation in Greece, at Athens towards the end of the fifth century.

The Dionysiac wave, to keep the same simile, when it met with corresponding local waves elsewhere than in Athens, produced corresponding high tides of civilisation—with an Apolline wave, for instance, at Sparta, or with an Aphrodisiac wave at Corinth.

But at Athens civilisation was a fuller, richer thing, and we may pick out one other illusion which helped to produce this result, the illusion of the Eleusinian Mysteries ; this must be connected closely with the Dionysiac illusion. There were other Mysteries existing in various parts of Greece, but the Mysteries of Eleusis, under Athenian influence, developed a unique

importance, an importance that tended to increase peculiarly the Dionysiac influence at Athens. Eleusis became "the great stronghold in Hellas of the doctrine of a life beyond the grave" (*Gardner and Jevons*, book iii. chap. ix.). There can be little doubt that the mysteries originated in some agricultural ceremonies and illusions connected with the mysterious growth of the seed after it is sown. But that does not concern us very greatly, except in so far as it reflects the illusion of the equivalence of the resurrection of the sown corn in the new plant and of the dead human soul in a future life. Now it would be in full agreement with the principle of our theory that great stress here should be laid upon a psychic illusion in immortality. In the *Phaedo* of Plato (c. 69), we read that "whosoever goes uninitiated to Hades will lie in mud, but he who has been purified and is fully initiate, when he comes thither, will dwell with the gods." And again, Miss J. E. Harrison in her most stimulating "Religion of Ancient Greece," chap. iii., feels justified in declaring that "the Mysteries held out a hope—and herein undoubtedly lay the secret of their extraordinary influence—of help and guidance, nay, even of certain and substantial bliss in the dim shadow-

land that lay beyond the grave." But we ought not to put very great confidence in arguments founded upon what ought to be an intimate knowledge of the inner workings of the Mysteries when we do not possess that intimate knowledge. They may have been a very important influence, but we do not know for certain that they were so.

Really, not much is known of the details of the mystic initiation: perhaps there was not much to know. "Aristotle," says Synesius, "is of opinion that the initiated learned nothing precisely, but that they received impressions, that they were put into a certain frame of mind!" (quoted by *Gardner and Jevons*, book iii. chap. ix.). No doubt that is about the truth of the matter: it is safer for us to leave it so. There were certainly dramatic representations, concerned especially with the grief of Demeter at the abduction of Persephone and the subsequent rejoicing at her resurrection: and in this clearly we can see the teaching of a psychic illusion in the immortality of the soul.

Almost every Athenian, we may be sure, was initiated into the Mysteries—for Socrates was reproached because he almost alone had not tried to become *μύστης*. But what from our

point of view is missing almost entirely in this Eleusinian illusion is the motive to urge men towards conduct that would differentiate them from other people. It seems that only unimportant ceremonial regulations were considered essential for the admission of candidates, and it is hardly possible to trace therein any civilising force. Some such force may have existed, and be unknown to us, but, on the whole, it is more probable that it did not exist at all.

Let us turn now to another most distinctive feature in Hellenic life, the public games. With our remembrance of English race-meetings and cricket-matches we are apt to look upon the Hellenic games in the wrong spirit. Primarily Hellenic games were not national athletic sports, but rather they were contests held in honour of various gods. It is in this light that the ordinary Greek must have regarded them, at any rate during any period before the close of the fifth century—that is, during the time that Hellenic civilisation was growing to power.

Their origin, beyond doubt, was religious, and we are justified historically in saying that any civilising effects produced by the games are due to the gods—especially to Zeus and Apollo

—in whose honour the games were held. The Greeks did not interrupt their national business, even their wars, in order to run races ; they did it in order to honour the gods in the way in which psychic illusion had taught them that the gods desired to be honoured.

Can we see, then, why this unusual illusion should have been evolved, why the Greeks should have honoured their gods by athletic contests? To us Englishmen, for whom somewhat similar contests are to-day an undoubted source of pleasure, it may seem unnecessary to suppose that psychic illusion can have had anything to do with the matter : but it seems that we would be wrong in presuming that a sense of pleasurable excitement, in itself, could have produced in Greece the very extraordinary national enthusiasm about the public games, especially if we remember that Greece was not a united country, like England, but a group of jealous and often hostile States, over all of whom the enthusiasm extended with remarkable vigour. The reason was deeper. The games rose to their peculiar prominence in Hellenic life because they fostered in each State the desire for that physical fitness which man is so apt to lose in cities, but which is so eminently desirable in the citizen-soldiers of a

community that is often at war with neighbouring communities.

The prominence of the various games, it is suggested, was a leading feature in the movement which raised Greece far above the neighbouring barbarian countries, because the internecine feuds of Greece had made the Greek the best fighter of his time, and it was the games that led to the establishment in each Greek State of the racial stock which could be victorious in their internecine strife. There is no rational justification for supposing that the Greeks held public games merely because they enjoyed them. Such a supposition appears to be unscientific, because it is supported by no earlier analogies at all, and only by a few weak analogies in the later history of mankind. Surely it is a more rational hypothesis to say that the games were evolved in order to improve the fighting power of the members of rival communities.

If we accept that suggestion, we can see that the problem which had to be evolved was the establishment of the fixed and final sanction of the holding of public games. This sanction evolution was able to ratify through the psychic illusion that the gods—the belief in whose existence was established already by

other forms of psychic illusion—took honour and delight from the athletic contests. The games, then, would tend towards the physical superiority of the various Greek communities, and so would tend only secondarily towards a higher state of civilisation. That condition, however, would tend to be produced by the material security which the games were inclined to secure: for we know historically that material security leads to an increase of civilisation, because the population then is inclined to grow towards the maximum that the available food-supply can support. There will be thus a keen rivalry within the community to secure the better positions, and these inevitably will fall to the higher intelligences in the long run: the rivalry will be keener than it would be where material insecurity was keeping the population sparse and scattered.

The argument leads us to the conclusion that the public games of Greece were a cause of increased intelligence, and so were a civilising factor. Thus the games promoted an increase of civilisation in two ways, which correspond to the two factors that we noticed above at Athens, and spoke of as the Athenaic wave and the Dionysiac wave; for the games led both to the glorification of each State—though

not of Athens more than of other States in Greece—and also, secondarily, to the advancement of intellectuality.

We may sum up this brief sketch of the suggested causes of Greek civilisation in the following way.

Any civilisation which, at some very early date, may have been evolved amongst the primitive "Mediterranean," or Pelasgian, people on the northern coasts of the Aegean Sea cannot be called in any sense historic. But after the Achæan invaders had descended from the north, and coalesced with a group of these Pelasgians, the Olympian religion professed by this combination produced the Mycenaean-Achæan civilisation, of which Homer—as we read him to-day—gives us a graphic, but probably unhistorical, picture. This represents the highest civilisation that the pure Olympian religion produced. The northern element in this civilisation is very strong. "The gods of Homer," says Miss Harrison (*Religion of Ancient Greece*, chap. ii.), "are not Greek in the classical sense; they are Teutonic and Norse." The Homeric Zeus, with his boisterous pranks and "Berserker" passions, above all things is not Hellenic in the connotation that usually we give to the term.

When this early civilisation sank into decay, new tribes, closely akin to the Achaeans, entered Greece from the north, the last to arrive being the Dorians. Amongst these new peoples the old Olympian religion in itself might have produced some civilisation, especially since it would have been able to work upon the potentialities implanted by the Mycenaean-Achaean civilisation. But there would have been some difficulty in keeping clear of the infectious disillusion which, no doubt, marked and caused the decadence of Homeric Olympianism—disillusion is to be observed even in Homer; he “does not take his gods very seriously.” To avoid this danger it was desirable that some new diverse influences should be introduced. By far the most important of these influences was found in Dionysus.

Dionysus came to Greece ultimately from Egypt, where, as Osiris, he was the most important deity of the psychic illusion of immortality. Osiris passed from the banks of the Nile to Crete—Ra of Amenti made the same passage and became the Cretan Rhadamanthus (*Religion of Ancient Greece*, chap. iii.)—where he seems to have coalesced with a native deity of unknown origin, and

became known as Zagreus. From Crete Osiris-Zagreus passed into Asia Minor, and became Dionysus. He did not advance into Greece across the Aegean islands, but apparently by a northern route through Thrace. There he took to himself Sabazios—who possibly may have sprung originally from an Egyptian source also—and from this coalescence, no doubt, were born those unseemly characteristics which seem so inconsistent with the pure Dionysiac Osirianism, but which may have been necessary to insure the popularity of the cult. From the combination of the worship of Dionysus with the revised and intensely localised Olympian psychic illusions already predominant in Hellas sprang the Greek civilisation of the fifth century.

CHAPTER II

EARLY ROMAN CIVILISATION

THE beginnings of the Roman religion are lost in the mists of a legendary antiquity. Indeed, original vagueness is part of the essential nature of religion. Without irrational legends the faith of the believer cannot exist as a psychic illusion. It is just this belief in the incredible, this spiritual sanction of the irrational, that enables a religion to raise its faithful sons to a higher condition of conduct and thought than that of the neighbouring unbelievers.

It is, therefore, only in the comparatively cultured writers of a later period that we find an account of the primitive faiths of Rome. This makes it difficult for us to see clearly what it was in the doctrines and faith of the early Romans that made their religion superior to that of the other inhabitants of Europe—excepting the Greeks.

And we are unable to contrast this early Roman faith with the contemporaneous beliefs of the barbarians, for we are even more ignorant of the esoteric principles of the barbarian religions of Europe. We have, then, to be content to form theories on the unsatisfactory basis of sophisticated later accounts.

We note, however, that the earliest Roman theology consists to a remarkable extent of the personification of conceptions and abstractions. Such words as Saeturnus, Ops, Bellona, Terminus, Fides, Concordia occur as names of the earliest personal deities; and philologically there can be no doubt that they are personal conceptions figuring general actions of social importance. Saeturnus (sowing) and Ops (agricultural labour), for instance, deal with matters of consummate value to the consistent continuance of a primitive community; for without them the community is exposed more severely to the effects of the vagaries of weather. The evolution of a psychic illusion, which influenced the individual members of a community to sow and labour in the field with consistent forethought, was, therefore, of deep importance to the continuance of the community. Without the illusion the individual would be content with

such toil that he might be secure personally in matters of food supply for a comparatively brief time ahead. The illusion of spiritual service would influence him constantly towards that laborious perseverance which alone would guarantee the future food supply of himself and of the community of which he was a member. The psychic side of the stimulus alone could overcome the physical selfishness of the individual, the physical distaste for labour. If we put clearly before us these two factors, the natural love of ease which is inherent in our animal nature on the one hand, and the need of constant provisional labour to guarantee the continuance of a superior condition of affairs on the other, we can see that a motive to overcome natural laziness and to secure perseverance in labour would be the objective for which the evolution of a superior community may be said necessarily to be aiming. And this object could be reached by the evolution of a psychic illusion in the members of the community, which would subordinate in their minds the pleasures of the present to the labours for the future.

Saeturnus and Ops thus assured the food supply of the members of the community. It was further necessary that the community

should be secured against the attacks of neighbours who envied the advantages that Saeturnus and Ops conferred upon their believers. Therefore we find a primitive faith in Bellona, the personification of the fighting spirit of the community. The individual who was to survive in the struggle of life was, of course, through simple biological evolution, ready to risk his life in order to obtain food, shelter, and the mate that was essential to the continuance of the species ; but this is insufficient to urge the individual to risk his life for the ulterior advancement of the community. For this a psychic illusion was necessary.

Amongst the Romans this illusion was evolved as a faith in Bellona and Mars. The form of this faith is entirely unimportant from an evolutionary standpoint, and even as a matter of interest for us it is subsidiary ; the all-important point with regard to the belief is that men having the faith were led thereby to fight, not from motives of selfishness but in accordance with the future interests of the community.

In saying this we do not call into being a fantastic sort of personification of a spiritual guide for the principles of evolution ; it is merely the simple statement that in the in-

numerable possible variations of conduct the succeeding and surviving variation was that which induced men to act and fight to the advancement of the community ; for this a faith in the reality of Bellona was the necessary psychic illusion.

It is only by such a faith that heroic self-sacrifice can be explained. When Decius Mus sacrificed his life for Rome in B.C. 340, and when his son, following his example, did the same at Sentinum in B.C. 295, they were acting under the influence of a psychic illusion. Their self-sacrifice was of no personal advantage to them, but it was of advantage to the community. The psychic illusion which inspired it had been evolved as a desirable principle in the consummation of Roman hegemony. The cases of the Decii are given as examples of the action and reaction of irrational motives on Roman conduct.

Care must be taken in praising or blaming such heroic self-sacrifices to remember that our ideas of goodness and badness are themselves evolved ideas. We estimate their value being ourselves under the influence of a similar group of psychic ideas, evolved in a similar manner ; while admitting that the action of the Decii was good, we must not forget that goodness

is not a thing *per se*, but is rather the conception of that which evolution has elected as the desirable conduct of the individuals in a community.

Turning from the Bellonic virtues, we notice amongst the early deities of Rome the communal self-seeking abstractions Terminus, Fides, and Concordia. These three psychic illusions may be grouped together conveniently, because they all deal with the mutual relations of the members of the community. The reason why these three deities were evolved to take a prominent position in the early Roman hierarchy was that the virtues which they personified were found to be essential to the advancement of the community. This statement undoubtedly to a considerable extent begs the question; indeed, the *petitio principii* is an essential part of the rational exegesis of the irrational.

Terminus, the divine sanction of landed property, shows by his very existence the intimate importance to the community in early days of the continuance of territorial rights and restrictions. It is difficult, perhaps, for us to grasp the importance of this psychic illusion; but in it there may be seen the principle of the restriction of growth in the size

both of personal and of communal territorial property, and this might be of importance in limiting the hereditary number of suitable men of prominence which it was the business of evolution (if the expression may be used) to place in control of the community. Terminus, also, by giving a psychic illusion to the religious sanctity of boundaries, would tend to produce notions of common honesty in the mutual relations of the members of the community; and such honesty would increase the co-operative efficiency of the community.

On this score Terminus approaches closely to the illusions of Fides and Concordia. We have some difficulty in realising the personalities of Fides and Concordia, because, to us, faith and concord are commonplace impersonal abstractions. But to the early Romans each of them was a personality. Camillus built the well-known temple of Concordia in 367 B.C. Ennius (239-169 B.C.), quoted by Cicero (*Opp* 3, 29, 104), uses the word "Fides" with an indubitable sense of personification; and similar archaistic references might be given in large numbers to the writing of Vergil and Horace.

It seems that the illusions of the personality of Fides and Concordia were of value in the

evolution of the Roman State, because it was this personification of abstractions that gave the necessary irrational impulse towards action in accordance with the principles of faith and concord ; and faith and concord, in the internal relations of the community, enabled its members to compose its communal economy in harmony with the object for which evolution may be said to have been striving.

These six deities, besides inculcating their individual virtues, acted together in promoting intelligence, because the psychic illusion of their personalities, however illusory, was yet psychic. It is the psychic rather than the illusory side that here becomes of importance ; for a psychic conception is essentially intellectual. If the worship of the personal deities who personified the typical virtues of the primitive Roman led to an increased intellectual power, we can see how important from an evolutionary point of view such worship would be ; in fact, the insistence upon the personal entity of the abstractions underlying the virtues would be the immediate object of that evolutionary selection whose ultimate aim we may take to be the political supremacy of the Roman community.

So far no mention has been made of Jupiter,

the deity to whom we are apt to look as the supreme god of the Roman hierarchy. Although the worship of Jupiter is undoubtedly of great antiquity in the Roman religion, it would seem that at first he did not occupy that position of dominant importance which afterwards he held at the beginning of the Augustan age. He was, perhaps, the titular father of gods and men at the earliest date at which we hear of him, but titular supremacy does not necessarily imply supreme practical influence.

The importance of Jupiter, indeed, increased under Hellenic influence. The Roman colony of Achaea was formed in 146 B.C., after the taking of Corinth by Mummius, and this date conveniently marks a large increase of Hellenic influence upon Roman ideas. But the same Hellenic influence had been then long acting upon Rome, although in a more subtle way. Rome was not in a highly civilised condition in 146 B.C.—Ennius, that quite archaic poet, died in 169 B.C. Roman religion was still in a state of flux. At whatever anterior date we may place the commencement of direct Hellenic influence—the Greek colonies in Southern Italy were really primordial in comparison with Roman civilisation—at that

date may be placed the real beginning of Jovian power.

It was, however, in the last century and a half before Christ that Jupiter came to exercise any influence comparable with his titular position. This he did by leading men towards a monotheistic theory of divinity that did not clash hopelessly with the philosophy that Rome so greedily swallowed at the hands of Greece.

The Roman hierarchy, with which we are all roughly familiar, was not the natural descendant of the primitive Roman religion; it was rather a son by adoption, and came into prominence as the imitation of Hellenic models. It would be interesting to know what form the Roman religion would have assumed if it had not come under the influence of the more sophisticated Hellenic civilisation; but historically the influence of Greece was prepotent in the evolution of Roman culture, as a decadent civilisation always is prepotent in settling the form of the offspring of superimposed immature civilisation.

It seems probable that the influence of Hellenic culture upon the Roman religion made possible the ultimate aggrandisement of Roman civilisation; the less sophisticated intellect of Rome was able to receive in the Hellenic

deities that psychic illusion which Greece had outgrown.

In the new and closely related illusions which Rome thus received from Greece, Rome found a new psychic source of life which enabled her to gain the hegemony of European civilisation. The fact that Romans and Greeks were connected phylogenetically made it a simple matter for Rome to accept the outworn psychic illusions of Greece: that was a mere question of nomenclature. Roman thought was young enough to rejuvenate the senility of Hellenic religion.

Let us apply this to the particular cases of a few leading deities. Reference already has been made to Zeus and Jupiter. The Roman Mercurius was identified with the Greek Hermes, but Mercurius was philologically the personified abstraction of commerce *a mercibus est dictus* (*Paul ex Fest.*, p. 124, Müll.). As such his position is akin entirely to that of the other early Roman personified abstractions, Terminus, Fides, and the rest. A temple was built to his honour as early as 495 B.C. near the Circus Maximus. It is only under Hellenic influence that he gains the attributes which we associate usually with his name; and this increased the definiteness of

his personality, which seems formerly to have been far from clear; this increased definition led, in minds unsophisticated by Hellenic casuistry, to a rejuvenation of the psychic illusion in his Olympian existence. The Hellenic Hermes was not a trade-deity, but a speech-deity; even to the ancients his identification with Mercury was apparently rather difficult; but the difficulty was overcome, because a renewal of the psychic illusion of the personality of Mercury was desirable for the evolution of the advancement of Rome.

The case of Aphrodite and Venus, from our point of view, is less important. The work which Venus personifies is bound up so intimately by Nature with the continuance of the species that a psychic illusion in her personality seems unnecessary. So the early Roman religion looked upon her as one of the least important divinities. After her identification with Aphrodite she became more prominent. Probably this is only an example of analogous variation. A sort of speculative hedonism would tend, also, to accentuate her personality.

Mommsen (book i. chap. xii.) speaks of Mars as the oldest and most national form of divinity in Italy. Perhaps it would have been safer to say, instead of "oldest," that he was

as old as any known form of divinity. The lust of fighting was entirely necessary in a community that was to get the better of its neighbours, so that we may feel sure that a psychic illusion personifying the abstraction of fighting would be evolved at an early period.

A collateral reduplicated form of the name "Mars" occurs in the song of the Arval brothers, and an equivalent nomenclature is to be found in the Sabine and Oscan Mamers. He was a truly Italian deity whose personality was largely fixed apart from the influence of the Hellenic Ares, who, indeed, while no doubt increasing the psychic illusion of his personality, would seem to have detracted, at any rate in our estimation, from the dignity of his character.

Under the title of Quirinus, however, he would gain evolutionary importance, from a purely Italian source, as personifying the patriotism of the Romans; the increase of the power of the psychic illusion which came to him as to the other gods under Hellenic influence would compensate from the evolutionary point of view for the influx of discreditable stories associated with his later worship.

Apollo was Hellenic, not Roman. The mere name shows this philologically, apart from his-

torical statements, for the early Roman form of the name was "Aperta, the opener, an etymological perversion of the Doric Apellon, the antiquity of which is betrayed by its very barbarism," as Mommsen justly remarks.

It is interesting to observe that the god of art was absent entirely from the primitive Roman theology; while Rome evolved for herself the illusions of the personality of such abstractions as typified the virtues necessary for the promotion of her political ascendancy, evolution, working for this end, had no special need of a psychic illusion that dealt with the artistic side of man's nature; indeed, we can see that economically Rome perhaps gained rather than lost, in the earliest times, by the omission to add the evolution of an Apolline personality to that of her already sufficiently numerous group of personified abstractions.

However, at a very early date, under Hellenic influence, the worship of Apollo established itself in Rome, no doubt because the intellectual value of Apolline worship was great: such assistance would be taken up greedily by that evolutionary process which was leading Rome up the path to civilisation; but we can see easily that it would be taken up only after the earlier deities had estab-

lished Rome firmly upon the path of progress. It is generally recognised that Roman art was always a parasitic growth, which betrayed at every moment its dependence upon Hellenic culture.

It seems, indeed, that we cannot lay too much emphasis upon the necessity of the personification in the divinities of the abstract virtues which made ancient Rome the mistress of Europe. For there were two necessary factors in the situation : (1) that Rome should possess the practice of those abstract virtues which could lead her to predominance ; (2) that these abstractions should have individual personalities to give the psychic illusion, the religious sanction, which alone could enable Romans to persevere in the practice of them where they were opposed to rational selfishness.

It is not necessary to assume that Rome possessed any innate superiority to the innumerable communities of Europe outside the Hellenic empires. What, then, was it that led Rome to predominance in Latium, in Italy, in the Mediterranean *orbis terrarum*? The city of Rome, in spite of the seven hills, was not situated in a position of commanding strength. We know that the peninsula contains numerous sites of greater natural strength, sites which

other cities used to their advantage in later ages—Canossa, for instance, with its almost impregnable rock, or Orvieto. And outside Italy, of course, examples are endless.

It is true that Rome had the advantage of being near the commercial possibilities of the sea, with her convenient access to the Mediterranean in the navigable Tiber; but Ostia has never been the leading port of Italy. Other ports have risen to greater naval importance, Venice, Ravenna, Genoa.

It was rather in the brains of her people that the germs of Roman greatness must be sought. There were other communities of Oscan and Sabine stock whose intellectual capacities were not inferior to those of Rome. How few of the great names who represent Roman intelligence are purely Roman in origin! Vergil came from Andes, near Mantua; Horace was Apulian; Cicero was born at Arpinum; Livy at Padua; Tacitus was, at any rate, not Roman. Other places than Rome undoubtedly possessed the potentiality of equal intelligence.

There must, then, have been some point, or some concatenation of points, which enabled the early Roman to reach a higher plane than his neighbours. What this was we can only

hope to perceive *ex post facto*, for the beginnings of history lose themselves in the mists of antiquity. It is suggested here that the distinguishing feature is to be found in the religion of Rome. Rome possessed at an early period that group of personified abstractions which embodied the virtues necessary for her advancement. Why these abstractions were especially predominant in Rome we are unable to say. We have to be content to accept the fact just as we have to accept the fact that a certain variation in an individual animal has induced its descendants eventually to occupy a new specific position. We cannot explain the cause of the particular variation. Out of countless variations the spirit of evolution, so to speak, selects the desirable variation, and through it produces the predominant species. Similarly the spirit of evolution, out of the many intellectual variations in otherwise suitable communities of Italy, selected the concatenation of desirabilities which existed in Rome, and from it produced the predominance of Rome.

We can see dimly that the physical conditions of Rome with its seven hills and its river were not unfavourable. We can see that Rome lay beyond, but in close proximity to,

the Italian limit of Hellenic political influence.

In Rome were evolved the psychic illusions of the personality of the deities personifying numerous useful virtues. We may suppose that, if the subsequent course of evolution had been clear of outside influence, the normal disillusion and disbelief would have followed the increased intellectual and efficient power ; but Hellenic culture intervened at the necessary stage in the history of Roman development. The close kinship of the Roman and Hellenic stocks made this intervention much simpler than would have been the case if the two stocks had been racially diverse.

The result was that Rome accepted and adopted the deities of Greece, who could be identified verbally, for the most part, with kindred psychic illusions of her own. The Hellenic religion was exceptionally anthropomorphic ; so that the accretions to the Roman theology were also exceptionally anthropomorphic. The psychic illusions gained in humanity as well as in personality.

Both Rome and Greece were profoundly influenced by this amalgamation : Greece because her spiritual decadence received a rejuvenated vigour as a parasitical growth upon the Roman

stock ; Rome because her psychic illusions, instead of passing normally into disillusions, were transformed with facility into more subtle, because more human, forms of faith.

Greece was unable to rejuvenate her faith for herself : evolution seems always to be unable to rejuvenate religious faith without extraneous help, because, in spite of the obvious abundance of material constantly supplied by the less subtle intellects of the uneducated, the intelligence of the more highly developed classes will always be so far superior that it will crush out of existence the increase of illusion which alone can save the State. Hellenic civilisation really died with Alexander of Macedon in 323 B.C.—the history of Cherson occurs to one as demanding consideration under this head, but it falls rather into the history of that general parasitic rejuvenation known as the Byzantine Empire.

Any rejuvenation of Hellenic culture at an early date could only take place outside the sphere of Greek political influence, and yet sufficiently near to that sphere not to be cut off utterly from its civilising influence. It could most easily happen in a community that was not racially altogether unrelated. Finally, it could only appear in a community which had

evolved independently the psychic illusions necessary to bring it into a position of local security. The very illusions which had led Rome so far were, it would seem, unable to lead her farther, because illusion in her primitive deities necessarily would have become disillusion, unless those deities were humanised by transformation.

This humanisation of Roman theology was a chief part of the great work that Greece performed for Rome and the world.

CHAPTER III

THE AUGUSTAN AGE

THE transformation of Roman religion under Hellenic influence, and the consequent confirmation of psychic illusions enabled the Romans to make almost a new beginning in their religious life ; and they were thus able to reach a higher grade of intellectual development than apparently would have been possible under the old religious régime.

From B.C. 197, when the two provinces of Spain were settled, until B.C. 49, when Julius Caesar completed the conquest of northern Gaul, Roman history externally is little more than a list of Roman advances towards European Hegemony. The Hellenisation of Roman religion precedes or synchronises with the first half of this period. The psychic illusions of Rome thus transformed were superior to those of any of the conquered peoples. It is difficult to imagine that this

coincidence is fortuitous. Is it not simpler to assume that there is a causal connection, and that we may detect here the explanation of the facts? The renovated faith gave to each Roman believer the illusion which alone could induce him to master his selfish and rational impulses, and to act with that personal irrationality which was conducive to the communal progress. It is difficult to see any other satisfactory analysis of motives and results.

Any student can note with ease the distinct difference in religious feeling at Rome between the beginning and the end of this period. At the beginning the illusions were young and vigorous. Scipio is the hero of it, a veritable hero of romantic illusion, as we see him in the pages of Livy. Julius Caesar is the protagonist of the end, and he is not a romantic figure governed by illusions, but rather the disillusioned practical man acting for his own interests—a fact that becomes the clearer the more closely we study the accounts of his foreign and civil wars. Psychic illusions had little influence upon Julius Caesar personally.

We need feel no surprise that the effects of a dying faith long continued to be felt in spite of its apparently moribund condition. For our knowledge of Roman religion comes

to us directly from the writings of the most cultured and intellectual spirits of the age—that is, from the very men in whom disillusion first would be obvious; so, in reading them only, without intimate knowledge of the intellectual conditions of the mass of the people around them, we are apt to imagine that the minds of our authors are typical of the age: we must be even more strongly on our guard against this fallacy in the study of ancient Roman history than we find it necessary to be in the consideration of modern times, where writing is so very easy and so general. The faith of Roman writers can never have failed to be ahead of the common faith of the Roman people, both in times of growth and of decay.

In a lesser degree this will also be true of all the prominent Roman soldiers and statesmen, who would tend to be men of exceptional vigour in their generation. No doubt the faith of Rome was always many decades behind the faith of the individual Romans of whom we read.

But even more worthy of note is the impetus, as it were, under which the effects of an intellectual movement are observable long after their efficient cause has ceased to operate. Thus conquest became almost a habit with the

Romans. In this way we can see how it was that the Roman State continued to increase—Dacia was made a province in 106 A.D.—long after the tide of decadence definitely had set in.

In the Augustan age Roman civilisation seemed, no doubt, to the Romans to be established as securely as the seven hills themselves : it was impossible for contemporaries to detect the germs of the coming degeneration. But such germs certainly were being nourished by the fading of the psychic illusions of an earlier time. Meanwhile Rome was at the apex of her vigour ; at no time did her intellectual life reach a higher standard than in the principate of Augustus. Augustus was a man of supreme practical ability, and so, like many other great rulers of mankind, he realised, by intuition or observation, no doubt, rather than by any intellectual process of deduction, that to secure indefinitely for himself and his heirs the position which he had come to hold in the State, it was desirable to invigorate the religion of his people.

There can be little doubt that we should be wrong in supposing that Augustus had any personal faith in the deities whose cult he advocated. That, however, is a matter of opinion based on a balance of probabilities.

In any case we must admire the unerring instinct which led Augustus to see in the rejuvenation of her ancient religion the only hope that Rome could have of stemming the tide of decadence. Augustus was supremely right, but in actual fact he was attempting the impossible. Disillusion was coming to reign in the hearts of Romans with a sway that no imperial rescripts or examples could overcome.

Vergil used all the magic of his verse vainly in the same cause ; the whole *Aeneid* is, in a sense, an attempt to reconstruct the Hellenised religion of Rome—to reinspire the moribund faith of a disillusioned patriotism. For this purpose—the purpose more especially of Augustus—the *Aeneid* was a failure ; it could not be otherwise than a failure, for psychic illusions cannot be constructed artificially ; they are a natural growth, an inherent and necessary antecedent, according to our theory, of the organic evolution of civilisation.

But if the *Aeneid* was a failure as an instrument of psychic regeneration, it remains, of course, a brilliant success as a work of art. From this side, also, it has a peculiar interest for us in our present task of studying the development of Roman civilisation ; for in no other work can we see more clearly the trans-

cedent influence of Hellenic culture upon Roman thought. The reference here is not so much to the more obvious imitations of Homeric and Alexandrian models, and the general affectation of Greek grammar and Greek syntax, as to the more subtle infiltration of Hellenic culture into the very life-blood of the poem. The *Aeneid* is not a typically Greek nor a typically Roman poem, but a typically Greco-Roman poem; it is the fruit of the civilisation that resulted from the rejuvenation of Hellenic culture under the power of Roman vigour. Greece alone could not have produced such a poem at this stage, because her intellect—if we look at it in theoretical isolation—was far gone in the decay that resulted from her loss of psychic illusions—a loss again that resulted from the increased intelligence produced by these very psychic illusions. Rome alone could not have produced the *Aeneid*, for the whole scheme of its characterisation, both in the case of its divine and of its human *dramatis personae*, is saturated with Hellenic personal individualisation.

It may be repeated once more that the writing of Vergil, and indeed the whole Augustan intellectual life, was in advance of the general scheme of Roman intelligence.

Vergil seems always to be writing down to the level of the previous literary generation, and the genius of the writer appears in the subtle way in which he could thus appeal to lower minds while retaining another artistic appeal, in the second intention, to the highest intellects among his contemporaries. It is just this bilateral appeal which makes it so difficult for us men of the twentieth century at first to endorse unreservedly the artistic estimate which the criticism of the ages has laid upon his works.

The strength of the Augustan policy lay in its reactionary nature, and in nothing can we admire the marvellous cleverness of Augustus more than in his attempts to retain the tide of progression at the high level which it reached in his principate by the support which he gave consistently to all reactionary religious principles. Unconsciously, no doubt, he was seeking to re-establish the psychic illusions which were slipping away from the minds of the Romans.

The attempt was useless because a psychic illusion is an organic growth, not a work of artificiality. But he was laying his finger upon the weak spot, and we must regard with admiration the intuition which was able to detect

this spot. As Merivale says, in contrasting Augustus with Julius Caesar: "He was more inclined for his own part to lend all his weight to support the old National traditions" (*Merivale: History of Rome*, chap. 51). As a matter of fact they were Greco-Roman traditions for the most part, and as such neither very old nor very national; but the Romans never acknowledged their enormous debt to the Greeks, whether from patriotic pride or from mere inadvertence.

The contrast between Julius Caesar and Augustus is interesting in the following respect. They were both, it seems, quite disillusioned, but where Julius in his conduct appeared to acquiesce in this fact, Augustus, on the contrary, tried to act in opposition to it. Augustus was so far right in that he saw that the reinvigoration of psychic illusion in religion was essential to the complete success of his policy; but Julius, in a deeper sense, was right in ignoring this, because the reinvigoration of psychic illusion, at any rate apart from extraneous assistance, was impracticable. No doubt neither of the two had any very definite sense of these things, because their historic outlook was too limited for that; we would hardly be justified in blaming Augustus for the lack of

success in his reactionary religious attempts, and probably we would have no more justification for praising Julius because actually he chose the more sensible course; it is very doubtful that he chose it because he knew that such a policy as Augustus afterwards adopted was foredoomed to failure. Julius, however, was a man of such extraordinary genius that it is by no means impossible that he recognised this.

In working out his policy with regard to religion, Augustus found a useful lieutenant, after the death of Vergil, in Ovid. Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and more especially his *Fasti*, were clearly part of the Augustan determination to renovate as much as possible the power of Roman religion.

The last poem of the *Metamorphoses*, which tells of the transformation of Julius Caesar into a star, was intended to give a religious sanction for the inauguration of imperial autocracy. The apotheosis of Julius was the first of a long series of imperial apotheoses. Many writers have been content to dismiss such things as trivial absurdities. It does not seem to be satisfactory thus to pass by them. We may look upon the Augustan apotheosis of Julius as part of the general Augustan policy, which

aimed at a reconstruction of psychic illusions. A divine father—even a father by adoption—was an actual assistant in strengthening Augustus in his personal supremacy. An elemental Caesar, eternal in the heavens, was a continuous influence upon the actions of each man who believed in his divinity. It is hardly consonant with the character of Augustus that he was actuated merely by family pride. He had rather a definite prudential object in view in this attempt to rear a psychic illusion round the name of Caesar ; Vergil had already made a move in the same direction when he sought to connect the name of Julius with the demi-divine Iulus.

There is no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that apotheosis reacted as a psychic illusion upon the authority of the living emperors, increasing its influence by giving a sort of antecedent divine sanction to their autocracy. We know how important the doctrine of the divine right of kings became in much later times, and something of the same divinity still hedges many of the monarchies of Asia. Certainly the readiness with which later Roman emperors paid the honour to their predecessors makes it appear to be fairly probable that the early attempt of Augustus was not without

practical result. As was pointed out before, such results would occur in the hearts of the uneducated many rather than in the brains and the writings of the educated few; therefore we need hardly wonder that direct references to the success of the illusion are lacking to us in the classical histories. An indirect result, partly achieved in this manner, is to be seen in the uninterrupted course of autocracy that dates from Augustus.

The illusion that thus began to surround the imperial household was in no way opposed to the general Augustan policy which advocated a renewed faith in the personalities of the older gods; for the Greco-Roman faith had never looked upon its hierarchy as definitely complete; it had introduced foreign deities with much the same readiness that the old Roman faith had shown in accepting the attributes of the Hellenic divinities. The worship of Isis, for example, was introduced from Egypt towards the end of the republic, and became exceedingly popular in the early period of the empire. We can see that such introductions might tend towards an increased psychic illusion when the feeling towards older deities—older, that is, in Rome—was inclining towards disillusion. So we may surmise that

evolutionary progress would favour the growth of new illusions in foreign deities.

Similarly, then, the individual or the municipality that accepted without hesitation the divine metamorphosis of a dead emperor would tend to be actuated in conduct by motives of an altruistic irrationality, and so advance in the social scale at the expense of unbelieving neighbours.

Augustus and his poetical and political lieutenants almost certainly were actuated by no motives of personal piety in the attempt to reinvigorate the life of Olympianism. Looking back over nearly two thousand years, we can see the somewhat academic artificiality of their efforts ; but this artificiality was not so obvious to the contemporary masses of the Roman people.

There is always a tendency in the unintellectual to accept as proved facts the definite statements of the intellectual. Certainly we cannot suppose that the ordinary Roman felt the philosophic scorn of a Tacitus towards the Augustan teaching. Indeed, if this had been so, the attempt would have been too obviously futile to have appealed to a man of the undeniable intelligence of Augustus. His attempts to rejuvenate a personal faith in the divinities of Olympus show us that the faith was a living

factor in the lives of the majority of his subjects.

The empire was no longer confined to the city of Rome ; it extended far beyond even the limits of Italy, beyond the limits of the shores of the Mediterranean. In the vast numbers who inhabited this empire the uneducated far exceeded in numbers those who, in the wildest sense of the word, could be called educated, and amongst the ignorant, psychic illusions, even of the most ingenuous kind, possess an extraordinary vitality and power. A sense of the vital and powerful personal existence of the Olympian divinities was, no doubt, a potent factor in influencing the conduct of the majority of the subjects of Augustus. And Augustus tried to work upon this sense as he found it still in existence around him.

We need hardly suppose that decadence was productive of visible effects in the mass of the inhabitants of the empire at this period, although we can trace its existence in the intellectual work of the cultured. Augustus was one of the cultured few working upon the minds of the uncultured many ; to do so he made use of the psychic illusions which still dominated the majority of the people of the Roman world.

CHAPTER IV

THE DECADENCE OF ROMAN CIVILISATION

THE decline and fall of faith in the Olympic religion is treated usually as an incidental fact in the general decline and fall of the Olympian civilisation. It is, indeed, looked upon as an aspect of that necessary decay of civilisation which comes about from some inexplicable cause inherent in the nature of man and his work. If we look upon the decline of faith as a loss of those illusions which are the essential cause of civilisation, we may find in it perhaps a determinant cause of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire.

With the death of Marcus Aurelius in A.D. 180 we may note that this tide of decadence definitely had set in, and from this date until A.D. 330, at any rate, when Constantine moved the seat of empire from the banks of the Tiber to the shores of the Bosphorus we

see a continual decrease of the influence of Rome upon the world to the advantage of the barbarians.

On the literary side we find only two writers of this period whose greatness is beyond question, Tacitus and Juvenal; the dates of their deaths are unknown, but it is probable that they took place before A.D. 130. It is in agreement with a theory of the intellectual religious causes of civilisation that decadence should be noticeable in literary work at an earlier period than in political facts; we have seen a similar consecution of affairs during the period of growth discussed in the last chapter.

Tacitus and Juvenal are both decadent writers. They both lament the days that are gone, but they preach no faith that can renew the spirit of those days. They are thoroughly disillusioned, and have to the full that critical outlook which so definitely marks the decadent writer. They teach no psychic illusions to influence the minds of men towards an irrational faith. They are, indeed, most rational, and have only reminiscent and regretful hopes to offer of a return to republican freedom with its puritanical virtues.

Juvenal, in spite of his avowed scorn of lubricity, is, in truth, one of the lewdest writers

who has won immortal glory, and it is difficult to suppose in reading him that he was not taking pleasure in discussing at length the obscene details of the vices which he denounces.

No reader of the first book of the *Annals* of Tacitus can believe that the author was inferior in intellectuality to the great writers of the Augustan age. Yet all will agree that he is "silver" and not "golden."

What, then, is this distinction which cuts him off indubitably from the earlier historians of Rome? Surely it is just the lack of faith in psychic illusion which marks the distinction. He has lost even the assumption of faith which is to be found in his predecessors. We know in our hearts that it is inconceivable to suppose that Tacitus was a faithful believer in the literal sense of the personal divinity of the various members of the Olympian hierarchy. He had lost all illusion, however much he may lament the loss entailed by this disillusion. His political *desiderium* for the republican form of government was really a *desiderium* for the irrational faith of an earlier age. With our wider outlook we can see the generality which for him was lost in particularity; we can see that no mere change in political functions

could have reinstated the former majesty of Rome. Only a renewal of lost illusion could have brought about that ; and such a renewal was impossible in his time, because religion is born, not made, is an organic growth, not a work of art.

Disillusioned men very seldom, perhaps never, come to be led a second time by the same illusion. And in the front rank of the disillusioned were the greatest intellects of their generation ; they were the men who guided the movements of Roman thought. They were filled with the bright light of reason ; they could see their way clearly. But reason was taking men down the long slope, where only illusion could have induced them to scale the difficult heights, as illusion had led their ancestors to scale them.

If we turn from the pages of Tacitus to those of the *Augustan Histories*, the decay of intellectual vigour is obvious—I do not wish to deny that biographies such as those of Commodus or Heliogabalus by Aelius Lampridius have their fascination for us, but we have chiefly to consider here the religious side of the question.

In this group of writers the whole religious spirit of paganism is dead, while we can hardly

trace the beginnings of the Christian spirit. There is no mention of the Olympian divinities as personally interfering in the affairs of men ; they are, at the most, impersonal abstractions, hardly more than verbal nonentities. The psychic illusions, even in writers of an inferior intellectuality, are entirely lost.

During this period of decline each individual must have acted from rational prudential motives that had no ulterior reference to irrational illusions ; that is, he must have acted with reference to an almost personal selfishness—we must not say purely personal selfishness because, of course, love still existed, and motives of affection must have had their continual effects upon personal conduct ; without psychic illusions it seems impossible to see that a man could be actuated by other than selfish motives with only slight, though perhaps frequent, modifications. There can have been none of those grandly irrational actions which can be inspired alone by psychic illusions.

Accordingly such irrational actions as are conducive to the communal advantage at the expense of the individual advantage disappear from the pages of history. We find no more of the early republican deeds of a romantic heroism.

It is true that it is hardly in accordance with sound philosophy to take the misdoings of certain tyrannical emperors as typical of the average lives of ordinary men. The emperors, with whose doings the chronicles especially are engaged, certainly were in an exceptional position, and their scheme of life was, no doubt, exceptional. Still, even the emperors must not be taken away from the spirit of their age. The world, in the words of the well-known saying, always has such government as it deserves, for otherwise government cannot endure, certainly not in the way that the imperial system endured in Rome. Looking not at particular conspicuous periods of tyranny, but at the general low and deteriorating standard of government, we cannot but admit that the general rules of conduct amongst ordinary men must have been, also, low and deteriorating.

The first apparent break in the continuance of the decline from the standard of the period of Augustus occurs in the time of the Antonines. The principate of Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 161-180) points to a reaction against the regular progress of decadence. In accordance with our theory we find the religious explanation of this in the increased vigour of philo-

sophical religious faith about this period. It was the first sign of that partial regeneration which became more clearly marked under Constantine (A.D. 306-339). A flash in the pan does not prove that light is not about to fail. This is true in application to the period of the Antonines, when the decadence was apparently arrested.

However, the more philosophic explanation is this. We observed towards the end of the republic that Hellenic culture, in combination with Roman vigour, produced the Olympian civilisation that centres round Augustus. We must here trace the reaction of Roman vigour upon Hellenism; the fruit of this reaction became apparent in the impersonal philosophic religion that flourished under Marcus Aurelius.

Such impersonal faith is ill-suited to produce psychic illusion in the minds of the uncultured; it is a religion essentially of culture. It produced here no great results in popular action. Indeed, it did not even produce very great results in the case of the cultured classes. The story of the campaign of Aurelius against the Marcomanni is lacking utterly in heroic episode—the miracle of the Thundering Legion appears to be a later invention.

The same reaction produced a more abiding

fruition under Constantine, and from it came the long and wearisome tale of the Greek and Byzantine empires down to A.D. 1453, when the Turks captured Constantinople. But this quickly becomes a Christian rather than an Olympian matter. Also it is left aside because we wish here to keep our attention fixed more closely upon the history of Western development.

With the disillusion that accompanied the failure of the Olympian faith to influence mankind any longer, civilisation decayed and intellectuality declined. One casual result of this increasing decadence is the poor supply of historic writings to chronicle the details of the period. Here again we have to leave Olympian ideals and turn to the Christian writers.

If we presume that the decline and fall of the Roman empire was the result of a failure of psychic illusion caused by the natural evolution of disillusion resulting from increased intelligence, it then follows that a new period of intellectual progress could only occur as the result of a new form of psychic illusion produced by a new faith. This psychic illusion could only become powerful when disillusion had carried men down the slope of decivilisation until they were sufficiently unintellectual

to accept the new faith unreservedly. This state of affairs would occur first amongst the less educated classes. In actual fact we find that new religions are grounded in the hearts of the uncultured many rather than in the brains of the cultured few. It was so with Christianity.

Christ was born during the principate of Augustus—that is, at the high-water mark of the Olympian civilisation. But the Christian faith did not become a potent factor in Roman politics until the Romans had sunk into a very lowly state of culture, because the men of the Roman world were not ready to accept the new illusions until they had passed right through a period of disillusion.

The Olympian civilisation sank into decrepitude with rapidity. Five hundred years saw the utter ruin of the old order, while almost another thousand years had to elapse before the new civilisation had become the dominant factor in European existence. Dissolution is usually the speedier process.

It is, indeed, very difficult to settle a date for the lowest point of civilisation between the two periods of culture whose existence we can see with such clearness. Civilisation, in fact, seemed to remain at its lowest level for a pro-

tracted lapse of time ; for this we may account to some extent by the increased size of the area upon which evolution worked in building up the new structure. But this does not seem really to be a sufficient and satisfactory explanation, for there appears little reason that the new civilisation should have been larger than the old. The difference in size seems almost to be incidental. We may note, however, the tendency of civilisations to spread, by direct educational infection, over larger areas than those in which they originated, and so to operate on the intelligences always of larger numbers, whose descendants thus become more fitted to join in the advance of any smaller areas which subsequently may be influenced by evolution towards a renewed civilisation. Also, we must not fail to allow for the catholicity of Christian teaching ; Christianity was actually more responsive to notions of universal brotherhood than the Olympian faith.

However that may be, the old, almost local Olympian illusion now had to give place to a much more widely extended illusion, which was finally to gain the majestic proportions of the Catholic Church.

It was in Rome that the old Greco-Roman civilisation sank into decay ; it was in Rome

that the old psychic illusions were lost ; so, too, it was in Rome that the new religion came to power.

It was necessary for the disillusioned Romans to find their new faith in the mysterious distances of time and of place, otherwise there would have been no illusion. And above all, it was psychic illusion that had to be evolved somehow and somewhere in order that a new civilisation might in turn be evolved from the new psychic illusion. Or, to put it otherwise, the men who could accept the new illusion without reserve, and who could be influenced by it in their daily conduct, were those who would belong to the communities or nations whose future greatness was being evolved. Now, such men first would be found elsewhere than in the disillusioned society of Rome, where, as has been pointed out already, the most thoroughly disillusioned spirits always during the period of decadence must have been the leaders of the intellectual life of the less disillusioned. Consequently it was at first elsewhere than in Rome that evolution found the necessary illusion.

On the other hand, as soon as men in the true Roman world had sunk into a sufficiently unintelligent condition to accept a new psychic

illusion, they would be driven through evolution to accept the best form of illusion which came their way—just as the best variation is selected by evolution to procreate the new species. The best illusion from the evolutionary point of view would be that which could lead men to a position of dominant intellectual vigour.

As to the actual geographical locality of the birth of the new religion, the state of affairs at this period is not unlike that which we considered in the birth of the Greco-Roman faith and civilisation at Rome on the outskirts of the old Hellenic culture. Similarly the new illusion is found on the outskirts of the Olympian culture in Judaea, where the inhabitants, as we know from the Old Testament, had evolved an intellectuality superior to that of the other peoples on the edge of the Greco-Roman civilisation.

Judaism, however, was not in close relationship to the Olympian illusion, and this is an important point, for primitive Roman thought, on the other hand, had been related closely to the old Hellenic culture. Therefore the transition from Judaism to Roman Christianity was not such a simple matter as the transition from pure Romanism to Greco-Romanism. It was

a much slower process. It was necessary for ancient Judaism to take upon itself its new and diverse aspect in primitive Christianity, before the Greco-Roman culture could assimilate it. This appears to be a prominent reason why Judaism had to undergo the transformation into Christianity before Olympian intellectuality could coalesce with it to form the Catholic civilisation. Also it was practically necessary that in some way Judaism should get rid of its old doctrine of exclusion; and this doctrine of the essential difference between Jew and Gentile was such an integral part of the old Judaism that we can hardly see how the difficulty could have been overcome by evolution otherwise than by the dichotomic gap that separates Judaism from Christianity.

Our knowledge of primitive Church history comes to us so exclusively from the writings of men actuated by a fervent faith in their own psychic illusion that we have difficulty in distinguishing facts from legendary accretions, added in order to increase the miraculous value of Christianity at the expense of paganism. As a matter of fact, if half the legends were literally true, no sane man could have failed to embrace Christianity with immediate conviction.

The Olympian civilisation at first was not ready to accept Christian doctrines, and we have the numerous Pauline and Johannine writings to show the eagerness of early believers to gain to their side the intellectual part of Olympian civilisation. But the process of disillusion, as we have seen, had still to descend far—down, indeed, until disillusion had become almost indistinguishable from the other intellectual factors of life. Intellectuality had to make a new start almost from the lowest point in order that the psychic illusion of the new religion might dominate the relatively highest intelligences of their times, for the highest intelligences, as has been said, are always, of necessity, the leading and directing intelligences. It was not sufficient that the relatively unintelligent inhabitants of the Roman empire should accept the illusion; it was imperative from the evolutionary point of view that the relatively intelligent inhabitants also should accept it, because the intelligent were the leaders of thought, and therefore the leaders of mankind in the coming times.

Finally, then, the disillusioned reached the stage when their disillusion became merged in the general failure of intellectual vigour; then, and only then, the new psychic illusion really

began to take its place as the dominant factor in European thought. Evidently, then, we cannot lay too much stress on the necessity of the absolute deadening of intellectuality in the space between the Olympian civilisation and the Christian civilisations, because it is by grasping this necessity that we realise the ultimate importance of the new psychic illusion, the ultimate dependence of future progress upon the establishment of a new irrational faith. That men might be induced to act in the irrational spirit which alone would lead them to perform the acts that accord with communal progress towards a higher state of civilisation, it was essential that the new psychic illusion should have the unreserved domination of their intelligence.

To acquire this new illusion it was necessary that men should lose entirely the former disillusion, for even a little leaven of disillusion in the higher intelligences would have tended by the power of its rational intellectuality to increase disproportionately.

Thus we can see that the Greco-Roman world was not ready in the fourth century to embrace Christianity unreservedly: it had to descend to lower depths. As it descended the potential strength of the new illusion was

increasing continually by the mere lapse of time. For the greater the number of years since the historical events related in the New Testament, the greater the potentiality of belief in the legendary accretions that were growing up round the life of Christ and of His apostles.

Also, perhaps it is not fanciful to note here the momentum which carries a resultant progression farther than it might be expected to go. That such a momentum in evolution is not utterly fantastic is shown by the fact that biologists have postulated its existence in the evolution of organisms, especially in the case of extinct groups (cf. Dr. Smith Woodward's presidential address to the Geological Section of the British Association, '1909). It is suggested, then, that such momentum in the decadence of the Roman empire led to an inherited rationalism which made the dominance of the new 'psychic illusion come into power at a later period than at first seems necessary.

There is another point in which also we can see a cause for this retardation. The decline of intellectuality throughout the Roman world produced a slackening of the linguistic tension so important for the preservation of the purity of the Latin language. And so in Italy the

Latin language became softened towards the Italian language. To a slight extent in Italy, and to a much larger extent outside Italy—to an extent increasing with the increase of the difficulties of constant access to the centre of Roman thought—an allied result was produced by the admixture of barbarian races, not originally speaking the Latin tongue. Italian resembles Latin more closely than do French and Spanish.

Here for us it is the degeneration of Latin into Italian that has a much greater interest than its parallel degeneration into French and Spanish, because in Italy the influence of barbarian admixture was presumably less—this suggestion is given with some diffidence, because Italy undoubtedly formed an especially attractive field of plunder to the barbarians; but probably Italy always had a large enough population to absorb any number of barbarians that actually invaded her. It would seem, therefore, that the decline of intellectuality was the main cause of the deterioration of the Latin tongue. Now this deterioration in Italy, and a similar deterioration along with a larger admixture from foreign sources in France and Spain—other provinces of the empire are omitted here—led to the production of at least

three different languages which came to be mutually incomprehensible. This would cut off the men speaking* these languages from the literature written in Latin. This certainly must have tended to retard the evolution of a renewed intellectuality in all three countries, though to a slightly different extent in each of the three according to local circumstances. Historically we see that the new civilisation reached its highest point at different periods in Italy, France, and Spain.

Now the linguistic isolation of these three races, who owed their culture primarily to the same source in Rome, must have been inclined to act against the early Catholicity of Christianity. It would seem, then, that we have here an analogous variation which actually was opposed to the final consummation for which evolution was working. At least, we can hardly feel sure that any profit even in the rivalry of pure intellectuality accrued from their segregation.

It therefore became necessary for evolution to acquire a sacred language, the universality of which would tend towards the desirable catholicity. Latin thus became the Catholic language of Mediaevalism, a fact which actually bore great fruit in the ultimate

outcome in increasing intellectuality' through the revival of classical learning towards the time of the Renaissance, especially in the countries rather far distant geographically from Rome.

In the long decadence of the Roman empire the lack of military enterprise in the nations of Rome became more and more apparent. Gibbon, in his fifth chapter, deals at some length with the details of this subject under "Septimus Severus."

But speaking in more general terms, we may note that the decline of psychic illusion must have had the effect upon each man of making him always less inclined to endure personal sacrifices for the communal advantage. The rational selfishness of the decadent Romans acted consistently in opposition to the principle of altruistic devotion, which alone could have been conducive to a communal regeneration.

Leaving now the question of decadence, we may turn rather to that growth of the new psychic illusion which is the history of the Christian Church during the ages of faith.

CHAPTER V

THE DARK AGES

SOME aspects of the decline and fall of the Olympian civilisation having been considered, it now remains for us to note a few of the more important points in the growth of the new psychic illusion.

The doctrine of the new faith which had the greatest influence upon the progress of mankind is that of the immortality of the soul, of the existence of the individual in a life after death. It seems clear that this is the cardinal point of the new illusion: it was upon this, and upon this alone, that the power of the new faith in its early days hinged. The Olympian faith, indeed, had preached the illusion of immortality; but it had preached it in most uncertain terms. "The doctrine of a future state," says Gibbon (chap. xv.), "was scarcely considered among the devout polytheists of Greece and Rome a fundamental

article of faith." Philosophic declarations and arguments, such as we find in Plato and other writers who copied him at a later date, did not appeal to the ordinary man. Christianity preached immortality as a definite, indubitable fact.

Now the dominant hold of Christianity upon the intelligence of the ages of faith is shown in nothing more clearly than in the unreserved acceptance of this doctrine of immortality by mankind. So completely was it accepted that little direct mention is made of it in the writings of the period. It is left unmentioned in ordinary life: it is taken for granted. But really we cannot over-estimate its importance in the evolution of modern civilisation; for on it depended the whole faith in the psychic illusion which was holding sway now over Europe.

On it depended the ultimate unimportance of the individual life on earth in comparison with the individual endless life hereafter in heaven or hell: this meant that the life on earth might be sacrificed with facile ease, if security of peace and happiness after death were beyond doubt.

Once this great point had been evolved into unquestionable certainty, the evolution of the primarily unessential, but secondarily neces-

sary, additional doctrine was a simple little affair—the doctrine, that is, by which the eternity of life became an eternity of happiness as a result of actions which were to the communal advantage. The establishment of these two doctrines was, according to our theory, the chief function of the new faith. More than that, it was a cause of the new faith; the position even may be stated thus—that the doctrines of Christianity were evolved in order to give a psychic sanction to this belief in immortality. The old faith in the deities of Olympus, with its offspring in philosophic Deism, had done its great work in leading men to the Olympian civilisation; and it had now passed away. Only this new belief in the existence of the immortal soul, which would feel eternally the pleasures or pains resulting from the actions of life on earth, could give the necessary illusion to lead men to a renewed civilisation after the disillusion which caused the decline of the Olympian civilisation.

The outlines of our theory of European civilisation may be repeated once more. The faith in the Olympian deities was evolved because it led men up to the Olympian civilisation: the increase of intellectuality which accompanied this civilisation led to disillusion,

and this disillusion was the loss of faith in the Olympian deities: from this followed the decline and death of the Olympian civilisation. Only a new illusion could lead mankind to a new civilisation, and this new illusion is bound up inextricably with a belief in the eternity of an existence of which the nature depended upon the actions of a man's life.

It was the first great function of Christianity to make this belief in immortality into a vital influence upon the conduct of each individual. The pagan adumbration of the doctrine of im-^{shad}mortality could produce only a faint impression, "soon obliterated," as Gibbon says (*chap. xv.*), "by the commerce and business of life." But Christianity sought to give a faith that never was absent from the heart of the believer, whose every action was thus performed with reference to that faith.

Such a faith actually did exist generally throughout the European area at the commencement of the long ascent to modern civilisation. Historically we can assert that it existed, and theoretically we can conclude that it must have existed. For it is this general faith that produced the individual actions which in combination form the communal conduct that led mankind to our civilisation. The

individual, instead of being actuated by motives that referred only to the present or immediate future, was actuated now by motives that had their ultimate reference in a life beyond death.

No doubt evolution was continually at work in making such motives harmonise with a continuous advance towards the goal of civilisation: but, in this, evolution merely was repeating what had been done formerly in its main features during the evolution of the Olympian faith—for, to speak in general terms, what was held to be a virtuous act in Augustan Rome is held to be a virtuous act to-day, and ultimately the motives that influenced men towards the evolutionarily desirable actions in primitive Rome were similar to the motives that influenced the early Christian towards his evolutionarily desirable actions. It was the proximate cause that differed, not the ultimate, or rather sub-ultimate, cause.

This belief, then, in the eternity of the existence of the soul was, if our theory is correct, the dominant feature in the victory of Christianity over paganism. The work of evolution in fixing the details of the form of this belief has come to us in the history of the numerous heresies out of which the Catholic faith finally was evolved. Heresy is the name by which

Catholicism knows those forms of faith that were rejected by evolution as unsuitable for the advancement of civilisation. Let us consider a few of them in greater detail.

Gnosticism, which found its first leader in Cerinthus, a contemporary of St. John, originated within the reaction of Hellenic culture under the Greco-Roman civilisation, especially at Alexandria. Reference has been made already to this important reaction. Gnosticism accepted fully the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. The rejection of Gnosticism was necessary because it minimised the illusion of the personal incarnation of God as Christ in Jesus. According to the Gnostics Christ used the body of Jesus merely as a temporary abode from which to teach men by the exemplification of perfection.

Such a theory had a special fascination for the more intellectual members of the early Church—Basilides and Marcion were prominent both as Gnostics and as scholars—for it was almost a rational theory. We can see that the acceptance of Gnosticism would have tended to weaken the psychic illusion in the divinity of Jesus Christ in the early days of the Church, by reducing the reality of the incarnation to an imaginary and spiritual hypothesis,

of which the shadowy unreality could have had little practical influence upon the conduct of a man. Now a prominent factor in the value of the Catholic theory of the Incarnation was that it brought home to the ordinary man the reality of the divinity of an ordinary man as incarnate God ; and this theory, it would seem, was especially effective in influencing the conduct of an individual by its appeal to the presumed possibilities of ordinary life as they appeared to the uncultured.

The rejection of Gnosticism has a further interest in leading to the evolution of a cultured erudition within Christianity to overcome the gnosis of the comparatively cultured heretics.

Evolution thus brought about the acceptance of the irrational, and this increased the strength of the Church numerically, for the uncultured, who could accept the irrational without difficulty, were in a numerical majority : at the same time, it laid the foundation of that growth of intellectuality which is the inseparable concomitant of improved civilisation. The acceptance of the irrational, at the same time, was all in favour of an increase in the power of the psychic illusion of the divine origin of the founder of Christianity. The men to whom we owe special

gratitude for the rejection of a rational Gnosticism—its rejection was of indubitable value in the advancement of Christian civilisation—were Irenaeus, whose great work was published A.D. 182-8, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria.

The successor of pure and rational Gnosticism was the dualistic system of Manichaeism. Its origin, though involved in hopeless confusion, seems to point to an attempt to fuse Christianity with Parseeism: also some connection with Buddhism is to be found. For us it is more important to try to see why evolution had to reject Manichaeism in the production of modern civilisation.

The inherent defect of Manichaeism, from the evolutionary point of view, was, again, the small value it gave to the personality of the incarnate Christ. It was an attempt to rationalise the difficulties of the existence of both good and evil in a world made by God. "If," said the Manichaean, "God is good and almighty, why does he permit evil to exist?" A rational answer to that question is the hypothesis of a spirit of evil of practically equivalent power to the good God. But, as rationalism essentially is opposed to the evolution of civilisation, it was necessary that the

irrational Catholic doctrine of the existence of the good and almighty God who produced all things, including evil, should be victorious under the power of evolution working towards the higher civilisation of man. Consequently the comparatively rational doctrine of Manichaeism was eliminated by evolution.

The rationalism of Gnostic principles in all their ramifications was in accordance with the teachings of Hellenic philosophy or Asiatic theosophy ; and therefore it was in direct disagreement with the disillusion of Greco-Roman intellectuality. This brings clearly before us the basis of the opposition with which Catholicism met these heresies. It was all the time essential to the ultimate success of the evolution of a Christian civilisation that the psychic illusions of the truth of the irrational should hold unquestioned sway over the minds of men.

The doctrine of the divine Logos, as we find it in Philo, seems to have arisen as an attempt to give a rational psychic illusion, which, by its rationality, could reconcile the intellects of the philosophic to the irrationality demanded by the necessity of ultimate advance. There is a lack of precision in the details of such Christology with regard to the personality of the Deity which seems to have militated

against its power in furthering the psychic illusion of the Incarnation ; and from this we may account for its subsequent failure to take a position of dominant importance in the advance of the Catholic Church. But it was certainly useful to some extent in fostering that intellectuality which ultimately was to be of such importance in the Christian civilisations. Origen, indeed, tried to be more precise than his predecessors, and accepted the inferiority of the Logos to the Father ; but in so doing he was opening the way for Arianism, which, as we shall see, had to be rejected finally.

The doctrine of Arius may be considered the grand attempt of Gnosticism to minimise the divine personality of Christ, to rationalise the conflicting notions of his perfect divinity and of his necessary inferiority as the Son of the Father. The two notions are, in fact, irreconcilable ; but to some extent Arius preached a rational form of doctrine in accepting the inferiority of Christ as the Son. His chief opponent, Athanasius, upheld the irrational doctrine that Christ, though he was the begotten Son of God, was at the same time in absolute equality of Godhead with the Father : Athanasius supported this completely irrational assumption while rejecting Origen's attempted

explanation of eternal generation, whatever that may have been supposed to mean.

Happily there is no need for us to try to grasp the subtle intentions of these casuistical disputes of Nicaea, which raised such furious passions in Christendom. But it is of interest for us to grasp what would have been the results of the success of Arianism. It would, indeed, have been the conversion of Christianity into a modified polytheism. Though, as we shall see, Catholicism at a later period became practically polytheistic, the time was not yet ripe for this: it would have been in opposition to the evolution of those monotheistic principles which were the basis of the acceptance, by such intellectuality as then existed, of the psychic illusion of the young religion. Once again, too, we can note that Arianism, like the older system of Gnosticism, was rational where the Catholic doctrine of Athanasius was irrational. And the establishment of a belief in the truth of the psychic illusion of the irrational was still the aim of evolution, as the means of producing finally the dominance of intellectuality in modern civilisation.

If we accept the theory that psychic illusion is the exciting cause of civilisation, the whole

question of the struggles of the heresies in the early centuries of the Christian era rises to an importance which otherwise it had ceased to have, even for the most faithful Christian. It is no longer a question of the history of the way in which the true doctrine made itself clear of error, but rather of the reason why evolution chose the Catholic form of faith rather than any form of Gnosticism.

Gnosticism was, indeed, antagonistic to the full acceptance of the psychic illusion of perfect manhood and perfect Godhood in Christ. If it had not been rejected, it would have meant that rationality was not rejected; it would have led to a rational explanation of Christianity, which, in a comparatively short space of time, would have meant disillusion; and disillusion would have meant that Europe was not to arrest the decline and fall of the Roman empire; and, therefore, was not to rise to the new heights of the Catholic civilisation.

The Council of Nicaea, with its promulgation of the Nicene Creed, was really a stupendous feature in the history of Europe; for from it we may date the beginning of the triumph of that irrational Catholicism which was to lead men so very far. The defeat of Arius meant the

prolonged success of that psychic illusion without which men could not be induced to perform the irrational actions which essentially were opposed to the selfish dictates of reason.

But historically we know that the decadence of Rome and the Roman empire in actual fact did not cease with the Council of Nicaea in 325, and we may suppose that this was caused partly by the very subtle and intricate nature of the disputes between Arians and Catholics. They formed a problem which the ordinary man of little education could not be expected to grasp in all its delicate bearings. Indeed, it is a difficult problem for us to grasp, even though we are far removed from the heat of the conflict, and even though we have the help of many erudite writers, both ancient and modern, who have spent their ingenuity in elucidating its difficulties.

The defeat of Arius did not entail the immediate annihilation of Arianism, which long survived under various forms among various communities, and is even still to be found among us as a living variety of Christian faith. This persistence of rationalism, among the Christians of the fourth and subsequent centuries, was, no doubt, an important factor in prolonging the decadence of Roman thought.

We have to remember, also, the momentum which the world had acquired at this period by heredity in its downward course ; this momentum had to carry mankind far before the new psychic illusion was enabled to take such a form that it could elevate people once more into a new civilisation, the civilisation of the Renaissance.

It is from the fourth century onwards that the legendary stories of the saints begin to fill prominently the history of Christianity. The lives of the saints from our point of view regain their old importance, because they emphasise the triumph of psychic illusion over the minds of men. We ought not to be content with smiling at the puerile absurdities with which they abound ; we have to remember that once men accepted such absurdities as true ; psychic illusion, in fact, was to this extent triumphant over rational scepticism ; and the evolution of belief in the truth of the illusion was of consummate importance to the progress of mankind towards civilisation. For this unreserved faith in the absurd must have had its continuous effect upon the actions of individuals. Men were not actuated by selfish motives of personal or quasi-personal welfare, but by a dominant faith in the presence and the interest

of the sainted dead, who regarded every action, and could punish or reward every act, even if not personally, at any rate by reference to a higher authority.

Saint-worship thus was adopted in the later stage of Catholic evolution as a secondary support to the psychic illusion of the ever-watchful eye of Christ. It naturally involved the danger of a return to polytheism ; and, therefore, we find little or no insistence upon it in the early days, when such a return might have involved Christian worship in the decadence and disillusion of the moribund Olympianism ; and it was clearly to the evolutionary advantage of Christianity to avoid this danger. Even when, at last, the danger became sufficiently distant to permit the establishment of an authorised worship of the saints, it was still found desirable to regulate the distinction between the worship of Christ and the reverence due to the saints.

Evolution could not permit the regularisation of saint-worship in the early centuries of our era ; even at the beginning of the fifth century, when Nestorianism was the leading heresy against which evolution had to contend, we find that Catholicism, while opposing the other doctrines of Nestorius, joined with him

and supported him in protesting against the practice of calling the Blessed Virgin the "Mother of God."

The history of the cult of the Blessed Virgin, indeed, forms a convenient centre from which to comment upon the growth of saint-worship. The cult seems to have originated as early as the fourth century, but only in such obscure sects as the Collyridians, in whom Epiphanius denounced the practice. Augustine shortly afterwards promulgated the dogma that, while the Blessed Virgin partook of the general corruption, she was free from actual transgression. Such a notion leads eventually to the doctrine of active worship of Mary which could permit Aquinas (1225 or 1227-74) to speak of her as "all our hope of salvation." This is a dualism which in practice became Polytheism in everything but name.

But the value of the cult of the Blessed Virgin, in these later days, lay in the definition it gave to the psychic illusion of the practical existence and personal interference of the Blessed Virgin in the ordinary actions of men. Such a faith in the real help of the Blessed Virgin in the conduct of everyday life gave a humanity to the divine illusion which the purer and more ancient direct worship of Christ

was in danger of losing. And the reality of the illusion was necessary to the evolution of civilisation, because such illusion alone could have the essential result of influencing individuals in the details of their conduct to disregard selfish motives under the guidance of altruistic principles.

Saint-worship in general popularised the influence of psychic illusion by its closer appeal to the participants of daily life, of whom the population of the world is composed. The reality of Christ was becoming, in fact, a hypothetical proposition, verbally accepted but practically ineffective upon the conduct of the majority of men. Saint-worship was evolved in order to reinvigorate the illusion that was becoming too ethereal. In fact, it made Catholicism catholic.

The popularisation of Christianity was of great importance geographically to its progress, because the inhabitants of the old Roman empire were mostly uncultured. It reinvigorated the influence of Christianity, not merely in Italy but throughout the European area. That is, it tended towards the diffusion of the new civilisation far beyond the centres of the Olympian civilisation. France and Germany, Spain and England were all

to play prominent parts in the new civilisation ; whereas Olympianism practically was confined to Italy and its immediate neighbourhood. Evolution hardly can have worked directly for an increase in the area of the new civilisation. It acts rather upon an intensification of civilisation in a limited area ; then only indirectly, to a dimensional extension.

This dimensional extension seems to have followed as a sort of analogous variation, consequent upon the direct evolution of civilisation—at any rate, in so far as that resulted from the psychic illusion of saint-worship. But the reaction of the dimensional extension of civilisation upon the internal quality of that civilisation was of great historical importance ; for evolution in this way obtained a larger and, above all, a more varied supply of material upon which to work—more varied because the materials themselves originally had formed their Christian civilisation upon the varying bases of unlike pagan psychic illusions ; and these varying bases had led to variations in the form of the acceptance of the Christian psychic illusion.

It was this quantitative and qualitative variational difference that made the Catholic civilisation take such different forms in different

places—in England, for instance, and Italy. It also made it possible for Protestantism to grow up inside Christianity while the Catholic civilisation was still in its early maturity. But to that point we shall return in the following chapter.

When we look back over the whole period with which we are concerned in the present chapter, out of the exasperating confusion of uncertain details we can gather the general trend of development. The earlier centuries were interested passionately in subtle questions dealing with the internal economy of the Holy Trinity. These centuries slowly fixed upon the intelligence of Europe the acceptance of the irrational Catholic doctrine. The very irrationality of this form of faith made it all the more suitable to be the basis upon which the subsequent centuries were to build their great structure of psychic illusion in the Catholic Church.

But the psychic illusion of the immanence of Christ had not a sufficiently close relation to the humanity of man to produce the Catholic Church. The interposition of intermediaries in the saints strengthened greatly the psychic illusion dealing with the birth of Christianity, by bringing innumerable personalities into

active connection with the affairs of men ; the saints of the Middle Ages were to faithful Christians real personalities ; and, therefore, they were real instruments in the furtherance of the evolution of the Catholic civilisation, both qualitatively and quantitatively ; for they acted continuously upon the motives and resultant conduct of the faithful.

When Dante wrote his *Divine Comedy*, about 1320, psychic illusion reigned supreme in the brains of Europe. Men might vary in the form of their faith—they did not vary much, however—but the substance of the Christian faith was believed universally. Individual aberrations into heresy did not affect the general belief in the truth of the illusion. The effect of this Catholic diffusion of Catholicism must have been enormous, influencing every act of every man in a way which we find it difficult to realise, because we have moved so far in these last six hundred years. Catholicism was a living faith which could make even Henry IV, an emperor-elect, sprawl in the snow at Canossa before Gregory VII. Similar examples are innumerable.

During the ages of faith evolution—if we may thus personify a principle—was not concerned directly with the increase of intellec-

tuality : it was concerned rather with the establishment of a psychic illusion which could ratify the motives of actions amongst men in a certain direction—in the direction, that is, of communal advantage ; however, the members of such communities as were developing advantageously tended in the long run to become more intellectual, because in this way they gained an advantage over the less intellectual members of less advantageously developed communities.

Incidentally, also, within any particular community the more intellectual individuals would tend through natural selection to occupy the better social positions ; and these positions would tend again to descend to the offspring of such individuals. So we can see, to some extent, how it was that psychic illusion ultimately led to an increase of intellectuality.

This result is not a little surprising, if regarded superficially ; for, as we saw above, psychic illusion is *per se* irrational, while intellectuality is *per se* rational ; so that an increase of rationality is, as it were, the result of an increase of irrationality. We see the same seemingly contradictory state of affairs if we glance again synoptically over this period.

The intricate casuistry of the earlier heretical

controversies, in spite of their intricacy, did not lead directly to any period of increased intellectuality; on the contrary, it led to the intellectual stagnation of the Middle Ages of faith; and it was from the unintellectuality of the later Middle Ages that the new intellectuality of the Catholic civilisation arose. This curious arrangement of the course of development makes it very clear that the evolutionary progress of the Middle Ages was not primarily in the direction of intellectuality—a fact that we might have surmised *a priori*—but merely in the direction of material communal advantage. We know historically that one result of this was the rise of the numerous small communes which are so prominent in the affairs of Italy, France, and the Empire in the period preceding the Renaissance. But these small communes, for the most part, became merged in the larger political syntheses which have become the modern nations. Yet the same process led to the formation both of the small and the great, the process of the evolution of communal advantage.

The resultant increase of intellectuality, which is so marked in the Catholic civilisation, was evolutionarily only a secondary point, at any rate at the earlier stages. But the de-

velopment of a large number of communities, advancing upon parallel lines, led, by the natural increase of size in such prospering communities, to a struggle for existence between them; they jostled one another, as it were, in their advance. The more intellectual communities tended to get the better of the less intellectual, because, even in the most barbarous of fights, brains are as important as muscular strength. So here we see an increased intellectuality resulting from the unintellectuality which, by evolution in the direction of material communal advantage, had produced the rivalry of conflicting communities.

The same psychic illusion prevailed throughout Europe; and this produced similar results throughout Europe, differing with the different bases upon which it worked—these primordial differences were, no doubt, the results of primordial psychic illusions differing *inter se*. Thus, in the thirteenth century, we find the whole European area ripening towards a civilisation much more widely extended than the old Olympian civilisation. Europe, in spite of the apparent rivalries of nations, was really homogeneous; for, wherever we look, we find the same psychic illusion dominating the intel-

ligence of men. It is the one and only constant factor in the situation, and this in itself would be enough to make us surmise that this psychic illusion was the efficient cause of the coming civilisation which was spreading over all Europe.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHRISTIAN CIVILISATIONS

THE election of Thomas of Sarzana to the papacy as Nicholas V in 1447 may be taken as the date from which to count the beginning of the history of the Renaissance. It is true that most writers have found pleasure in marking earlier series of events which foreshadowed the great outburst of culture in Europe of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Historically they are justified in doing so, for the evolution of civilisation is a continuous process, in which one epoch becomes the next by subtle gradations. It is only after a long lapse of time that we can point out the characteristic traits that distinguish each period.

Thus Olympianism passed into Mediaevalism, and Mediaevalism grew into the Catholic civilisation. Upon the theory outlined in this book, we look upon the Catholic civilisation as the outcome of the dominant faith of the

Middle Ages in the psychic illusion of Catholic Christianity, which had induced men unconsciously to subordinate their personal or quasi-personal motives to the principles tending towards a higher civilisation.

The flower of Catholicism bloomed first in Italy, and for this we may account, amongst other reasons, by the fact that Italy had been the centre of Olympianism, which had left there magnificent brain-material from which the new intellectuality could be formed. Although the inherent greatness of this material largely had lain dormant through the dark period of the ages of faith, we may presume that the potentiality of intellectuality had not ceased to underlie the apparent ignorance and apathy. There does not appear to be much difficulty in accepting this supposition: it corresponds very closely to the belief in the existence of dormant characters whose potentiality is beyond question in biology.

At any rate, it is in Italy that history first traces the real advent of Catholic civilisation. But there at once we notice that signs of the ensuing decadence are not wanting. These signs are the more obvious because it is in political matters rather than in artistic production that they are to be observed; and

political decadence, leading to political ruin, means the destruction of the basis upon which even artistic production ultimately must rest. It is curious to note how far the political and moral decadence of Italy had proceeded before the advance of the artistic current was diverted by the more powerful stream of non-artistic decadence. This, again, shows us how thoroughly artistic was the whole strength of the Catholic civilisation. Outside the realm of art the Catholic civilisation in Italy had little vitality. It is for its artistic productions only that to-day we remember and revere and love the Italy of the Renaissance.

Politically Italy was decadent soon after the middle of the fifteenth century, and that is why the Catholic civilisation of Italy was so shortlived. It was an artistic civilisation resulting from a very human polytheistic Catholicism. By A.D. 1495, when Charles VIII won the battle of Fornovo, political decadence indubitably was the dominant feature in Italian history, and the great days of the Italian Renaissance may be said to close under Clement VII with the sack of Rome in 1527. Between the dates 1447 and 1527 Italy gave to the world a group of men of genius to which we can find no parallel, as we look back

through former centuries, until we reach the Augustan period in Rome.

Though the fact is obvious that the crowning glory of this period was its artistic work, there is for us perhaps some difficulty in grasping the reasons why the intellectuality of the Renaissance, especially in Italy, should have taken this artistic bias, almost to the exclusion of practical politics. It is so different from the work of the Greco-Roman civilisation which performed such mighty feats of arms in establishing the dominion of the Roman empire. Some analogy, however, may be found in the work of the Athenian civilisation, which must always be remembered more for its artistic and literary productions than for its purely political operations. We ought, then, according to our theory, to find a similar parallel between the psychic illusions that preceded Athenian civilisation and the psychic illusion of Mediaeval Europe. Such a parallel can be drawn, though roughly, yet with sufficient closeness to be convincing.

The outstanding feature of the Hellenic religion, as we see it in Athens in the fifth century B.C., is its animistic humanity. Not only were there individual deities in every natural object, in every tree and hill and river,

but these deities were essentially human in their attributes : so, too, the greater deities of the Hellenic hierarchy were essentially human. This marks the great distinction which has been noted so often between the Hellenic religion and the Egyptian and Oriental mythologies. Anthropomorphism was the special distinction of the Hellenic religion, and it made the civilisation which resulted from the Hellenic religion peculiarly human—that is, peculiarly artistic.

There was a time, anterior to the production of the chief wonders of Hellenic art, when every Greek accepted whole-heartedly the psychic illusions of his religion ; and these illusions must then have had a dominant power over his conduct. The humanised divinities, in fact, ruled the Hellenic world, and gave the humanised and humanising art of Greece to Europe, an art that was singularly free from bestial monstrosities.

Now the analogies between the Hellenic mythology and Catholic saint-worship are not far to seek. We do not find, and we ought not to expect to find literal parallels. The analogies are all the more convincing because they are spiritual. The more we generalise, the more certain we may be that the analogies have

a real existence. There is no need for us to try to identify Zeus with Jehovah, Apollo with Christ: such identifications may be over-accentuated with facility, and carry us into absurdities against which we must be on our guard. Nevertheless, it is true that Hellenism found humanised divinities everywhere, and similarly Catholicism in the later centuries of the Middle Ages found its saints with their human attributes everywhere, ready to take an interfering interest in all the actions of man. In both cases psychic illusion guided the conduct of believers on similar lines, on the lines marked out, so to speak, by evolution as leading towards civilisation: and from the similarity between the forms of the two illusions we need feel no surprise that there should be a corresponding similarity in the resultant artistic nature of the ancient Athenian civilisation and the Catholic civilisation of the Renaissance.

The Athenian civilisation was short-lived: we may confine its period of greatness with sufficient accuracy to the seventy-seven years between 481 and 404 B.C. It is a mere coincidence, of course, that the same length of time within three years also elapsed between the election of Nicholas V and the sack of

Rome by the army of the Constable de Bourbon, which are the events which deeper thinkers have placed at the commencement and close of the greatest period of Catholic culture in Italy. But it is not a coincidence that made the two periods both tend to occupy a similarly short space of time: that was inherent in the nature of the two civilisations which corresponded so closely to one another, and which were marked out pre-eminently by their artistic productions.

The Catholic civilisation was far from being confined to Italy alone. The whole of Western Europe partook of it in varying degrees—we may say that Western Europe artistically bore a similar relation towards Florence, Milan, and Venice to that borne by Greece towards Athens—for, as we have seen, the same psychic illusion dominated the whole of Christendom in the closing centuries of the Middle Ages. We may note the arrival of the Catholic civilisation in three centres besides Italy, namely in Spain, in France, and in England.

But in Spain the natural evolution of civilisation was distorted by two factors. Of these the first is the influx of the Arabs from Africa. Arabian civilisation, the outcome of the Mohammedan illusion, was widely different in

age, and also in its innate qualities, from Catholic civilisation : and although Catholicism eventually crushed it in Spain, the conflict was so protracted and severe that Mohammedanism left indelible traces upon the evolution of Spanish civilisation. The second factor is the discovery of America, in 1492 A.D., which, in Spain more than elsewhere, had an important influence in distorting the natural growth of Catholicism. Therefore we cannot conveniently trace the natural evolution of Catholicism in Spain.

In France the position of affairs was very different. Neither the Arabian civilisation nor the discovery of America had any appreciable effect upon the history of the Renaissance in France, and yet for two reasons France was unable to work out for herself the natural evolution of her Catholicism. With the beginning of the Renaissance civilisation France became more open to constant intercourse with Italy on account of the increased intellectual activity of the Italians. Italy, as we have seen, was in a more advanced stage of culture than France. Thus France, under Italian influence, seems to have entered upon her civilisation before she was really ready for it. Secondly, the Catholic civilisation in France

was distorted by Huguenot ideas, which owed their origin to the teachings of Swiss and Teutonic reformers : the effects of these teachings upon European civilisation will be discussed more conveniently in our later consideration of the Protestant civilisation.

It remains, then, for us to deal with the English Renaissance civilisation. England held a unique position in the religious history of Europe. She was dominated entirely by the Catholic illusion until the middle of the fifteenth century : it was then only that Protestantism, which had grown up elsewhere, began to influence the minds of the mass of the inhabitants. Catholicism already had begun to blossom into the gorgeous flower of Elizabethan intellectuality before the foreign Protestantism had succeeded thoroughly in establishing the chilling effects of its new illusion.

Clearly we are justified in looking upon the Elizabethan age of genius as the outcome of Catholicism rather than as the immediate result of the new Protestantism. The time was too short between the introduction of Protestantism into England and the greatest period of the Elizabethan drama. The increase of English intellectuality was entirely on a level with the

Italian outburst of artistic activity: the fact that the English Renaissance was later in time than the Italian does not invalidate the truth of this; for evolution, working upon different material, even though working with the same instrument, could not produce contemporaneous results. The analogy of other countries shows us that the Catholic civilisation tended to be later elsewhere than in Italy.

Lastly, we have a very different argument leading to the same conclusion in the internal form of the Elizabethan civilisation. For it was an artistic civilisation, and that, as we have seen, was the form of civilisation that we might expect to rise out of the animistic illusion of Catholic saint-worship: it is not the form that we might expect to rise out of a monotheistic Protestantism. Contemporary Protestant thought, in fact, positively was opposed to dramatic art, which, as we know, was eclipsed entirely under the Puritan rule of Cromwell. It is necessary to lay much stress upon this Catholic origin of the Elizabethan civilisation, because it is only if we accept that fact in all its bearings that we are able to understand why it was that after the Elizabethan period we find that comparative dearth of genius in England until we reach

the nineteenth century — we may look upon Milton (1608-74) as the last great genius of the period of the Renaissance in England.

It follows naturally from the theory here adumbrated that the Catholic civilisation should be succeeded by a period of decadence that synchronised with the disillusion of Catholicism, or at any rate was closely subsequent to the increase of that disillusion. But the new factor of Protestantism introduced an abnormality into the natural evolution of rational disillusion in England. Politically it brought about the civil war, with its temporary triumph of Puritanism.

But with the return of the Stuarts under Charles II we go back to the more normal spread of decadence; but with a difference. For Protestantism all the time was growing up within the decadence of the Catholic civilisation, much in the same way that Christianity had grown up within the decadence of Olympianism. But Protestantism grew more easily than its analogue, because ultimately it was based in Christianity upon the same psychic illusion as Catholicism: also because in England it received continual support and encouragement from the Protestantism of Central Europe, where Protestantism reached

an earlier maturity than in England. But for the moment let us consider rather the advance of the decadence of the Catholic civilisation in England.

To isolate the two contemporaneous movements of decadence and growth is a problem of considerable difficulty. What must now be said on the decadence of English civilisation during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries will not be endorsed readily by many readers. Nevertheless it is suggested that it is the true reading of the evolution of civilisation in England.

The Elizabethan civilisation won its chief glories in the field of poetic literature, and it is in the field of literature that we are able most easily to find the chief signs of decadence. A decadent literature seems to be marked by two special characteristics—an attention to strict rules of versification and an encyclopaedic and critical display of the knowledge that comes from much reading. In the period under consideration we find two men in England who, while they are leading lights in literature, to a remarkable extent show these special characteristics, namely Pope and Johnson, neither of whom are usually classed as decadent. The word “decadent” is used here as implying a

waning period of intellectuality rather than with the second intention of almost effeminate weakness which we have come to read into the term.

Pope, says Craik, had "talent enough for anything." That is true ; he had talent, but none of the Elizabethan creative genius. He is a self-conscious poet, an artificial poet, and in this he is a son of the age in which he wrote, and in this he shows that it was a decadent age. He has a delicacy of touch, which, by its gem-like precision, adds a brilliance to his satire ; he reminds one of Persius in the Greco-Roman decadence, and, of course, it is well known that his versification loses strength by its very want of laxity and freedom.

Johnson is the second figure of the period for whom it is claimed that he has the characteristics of a writer of a decadence. He reminds one of the Alexandrian writings of the Hellenic decadence. His literary knowledge is encyclopaedic, his critical penetration remarkable, his style ponderous and wanting in the spontaneity that marks the period of increasing vigour.

Pope and Johnson do not stand alone : in Collins and Gray, in Addison and Steele we find the same traits. Even the earlier Dryden

lacks the exuberance of Elizabethanism. All these writers show us in every line that they lived in a period of decadence.

This is more clearly marked in literature and art than in politics and war, and this apparent result arises from the fact that decadence was on the whole the widespread feature of European civilisation at this period. It is the natural and obvious result of the undoubted glories of the Catholic civilisation of the Renaissance. Such a decadence was exactly what *a priori* we would expect to find. The mutual relations of the various European States, however, add complexity to the problem, and make it difficult to grasp the fact, because we are led inevitably to contrast the various achievements of the different nations, and to suppose that, when one is superior to another, it owes its superiority to some inherent principle of growth. But this is surely not true: any apparent superiority may show only that in this particular region decadence in this particular quality has been proceeding less swiftly than elsewhere, so that the lesser decadence is in a higher position relatively to that of the neighbouring civilisation, although it is really in a lower position relatively to its own former state of culture.

Marlborough thus, it seems, won Blenheim, not because his army was equal or superior to the Elizabethan material which defeated the Spanish Armada, but because in military matters France under Louis XIV was more decadent than England.

At the same time, there was the second factor rising through the decadence of Europe in the Protestant religion, and this we must now consider.

Protestantism was practically a new religion, giving a new form of psychic illusion to the world. For the core of the later mediaeval Catholicism was the psychic illusion of saint-worship, while the core of Protestantism was the psychic illusion of an immanent individualised Christ. The Catholic believer of the later Middle Ages approached his deity through the intermediary saints, who soon came to form a polytheistic hierarchy in practical independence of the faintly imagined supreme deity. Protestantism, on the other hand, taught a pure monotheism.

This appears to be the essential distinction between these two forms of Christianity from the evolutionary point of view. It works out in the resultant civilisations exactly as we might have anticipated. The Catholic civilisation,

being polytheistic, gave the world the artistic and literary glories of the Renaissance: the Protestant civilisation, being monotheistic, gave the world the inartistic, scientific, mechanical, wonders of the Victorian era: the nineteenth century is ever memorable for the theoretical science that centres round the name of Darwin, and for the mechanical science that surrounds us to-day on every side. These are the glories of the Protestant civilisation.

The decadence of Catholicism and the younger growth of Protestantism have affected one another mutually, so that it is impossible for us, who are so close to these movements, to distinguish clearly between them. Lapse of time is necessary for the appreciation of the main currents.

We may put down the partial rejuvenation of Catholicism in the Oxford Movement as an interesting sign of the reaction of Catholicism upon Protestantism. This reaction has, also, given us the art of the latter decades of the nineteenth century: although here we ought not to neglect the important factor of the growth of intellectuality, which was a necessary concomitant of the scientific bias of the Protestant civilisation.

The mechanical science, due ultimately to

the Protestant psychic illusion, has had a most important secondary effect as applied to locomotion ; for the increased facility of communication has led to an extraordinary diffusion of the scientific and mechanical results of the Protestant illusion throughout the whole world.

But the mutual reactions of the forces that are moving the various communities form too complex a problem to be grasped by the mind of us who live in the throes of these reactions. It is very difficult for men who are contemporaneous with such movements to grasp with any certainty their bearings in detail. In the conclusion to this volume an attempt is made to form some idea of the larger forces at work among us in a generalised form.

But here we ought to note the effects of the reaction of Protestantism upon Catholicism—the “ Catholic Reaction ” Symonds calls it in his history of the Renaissance in Italy.

This reaction affected England very slightly because with us Catholicism was stamped out as a political factor in the latter half of the seventeenth century.

In Italy, France, and Spain the case was very different. There the declining Catholicism was still strong enough to crush Protestantism, and then proceed upon its natural

course of decadence, which thus became the dominant factor of their histories throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In Italy this decadence was unbroken until the latter half of the nineteenth century, when the reaction of Protestant thought, along with the mechanical diffusion of Protestant intellectuality, produced the movement that resulted in the formation of the modern kingdom of Italy.

In Spain the reaction is less distinct, perhaps it is still to come. But the colonisation of Spanish America may have taken the place of the result of a simpler reaction.

In France affairs were much complicated by the presence of the Huguenots. Although Catholic decadence won the day, Protestant intellectuality was a constant disturbing factor in the progress of French decadence during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—how thoroughly decadent are the Encyclopaedists ! At the close of the eighteenth century the distorted reaction produced the Revolution and the military triumphs which surround the name of Napoleon.

It appears that the reaction of Protestantism upon Catholicism is a sufficient explanation of the main forces at work on the Continent of

Europe at this period. But we must remember that such judgments are entirely *ex post facto*. We can only read into events the theory which we wish to find therein. Such judgment gains power simply from the concurrence of events. The events of modern history appear to concur sufficiently to make this theory of the religious causes of civilisation at any rate probable.

PART II

CHAPTER I

ANCIENT EGYPT

THE most distinctive feature in the great change from Olympianism to Christianity in Europe was the introduction of a general faith in the immortality of the soul. This change must have had a wonderful effect upon the conduct of every individual who accepted the new belief without reserve; and in a wider sense the universal acceptance of the doctrine of the continuance of life after death must have had a similarly great effect upon the development of the community—that is, upon the resultant civilisation. It is therefore of peculiar interest to the student of the evolution of civilisation to note to what extent similar psychic illusions have held sway in the minds of men who composed other and earlier communities that are remarkable for their independent development of civilisation.


As we look back through the history of man-

kind, we may observe that there is one civilisation which stands out at once as of pre-eminent interest in this connection—the civilisation of Ancient Egypt. It is true that we are hardly justified in speaking of the ancient Egyptian religion as if it were a simple and complete identity. Learned Egyptologists—especially Professor Flinders Petrie—have pointed out that various distinct factors can be traced in the formation of that composite and long-lived group of faiths which we, looking back over a great lapse of time, conveniently can unite under the facile phrase of “Egyptian religion.” Indeed, it would be extraordinary if exactly the same form of faith were found to be flourishing under the Ptolemies that had flourished thousands of years earlier under the first dynasties. There was change, progress, and decay in Egypt as elsewhere. But there is one particularity of faith, one form of psychic illusion that stands out with such remarkable prominence throughout the long space of Egyptian history that, in a sense, it makes it allowable for us to treat Egyptian religion as a simple unity: and that is faith in the continuity of life after death. “The Egyptian regarded a continuity of life as so assured that it did not make

much break in the life for it to be transferred from one state to the other " (*W. Flinders Petrie: Religion and Conscience in Ancient Egypt*).

For us the deity round whom the elaborate system of Egyptian faith in immortality especially centres is Osiris. The Egyptologists have formed ingenious and convincing theories about the earliest steps by which Osirian worship came to be one of the leading characteristics of Egyptian civilisation—how the Osiris worshippers were attacked by the Asiatic Set worshippers; how after defeat they sought the alliance of the Isis worshippers of the Delta, and were thus re-established in power, until the Asiatics returned in force and "killed Osiris"; how, ultimately, with the assistance of the Horus worshippers, the Set worshippers finally were expelled, and the wonderful triad, Osiris, Isis, and Horus, came to dominate the whole valley of the Nile.

But here we are not concerned with these interesting historical facts or hypotheses; we are not concerned with the coming of the Osirian religion into its position of superiority in Egypt. We have to deal rather with the civilising effects of this religion after its due establishment in the Nile valley. From



this point of view there is interest attached to all the three deities that have been mentioned.

Let us first consider the kingdom of Osiris. "This was a counterpart of the earthly life, but was reserved for the worthy" (*W. Flinders Petrie: Religion and Conscience*, chap. iii.). This sentence contains two statements that give us the key, as it seems, to a true understanding of the reasons why the Osirian faith was a civilising faith—was, in fact, a cause of civilisation in Egypt. This belief, at any rate in its main outline, corresponds to the Christian faith in a future life, dependent in its nature upon the earthly behaviour of the believer. It is hardly necessary to point out once more the civilising effects which such a belief must have had upon the conduct of those who accepted the illusion, driving them to act otherwise than under the impulse of mere physical appetite.

But there are points that distinguish these Osirian judgments and rewards very clearly from the Christian judgments and rewards. The Osirian standard of virtuous behaviour was not so lofty as the Christian standard. The Egyptian had merely to protest his innocence of forty-two quite ordinary sins. It was an

examination which an ordinary English gentleman would have passed without special preparation. Now this is a very noticeable point of difference ; for the Egyptian was not called upon by the Osirian faith to aim at impossible ideas, to strive always to follow " counsels of perfection " with such closeness as was, or was not, inconsistent with human nature. Therefore the Osirian illusion was not leading men continually towards higher levels of ideal conduct. It was content, having taken men a certain way up the hill, to prevent them slipping down again. That appears to be the chief reason why the Osirian faith failed to give Egypt the highest fruits of civilisation.

There were, of course, other reasons, and we may note some of them here. The Osirian faith was not working upon such excellent material as Olympianism had extended throughout the Roman empire. The beginnings of Osirianism, indeed, are lost in a prehistoric antiquity ; but certainly there can never have been in Egypt in prehistoric times any civilisation at all comparable to the Olympian civilisation, and it is just because Christianity was able to work upon brain-material which contained within itself, through Olympianism, the potentiality of a fuller, richer growth, that we are

living to-day in our own unparalleled civilisation. Osirianism, in addition to the more lowly level of the Osirian standard, had to work upon material that did not contain, in the inherited effect of a previous period of civilisation, the potentiality of an exceptionally luxuriant growth.

Also the peculiarly composite nature of Egyptian theology was never crushed quite out of sight, and this, too, interfered with the civilising effects of Osirianism. It is true that the marriage of Osiris and Isis and their parentage of Horus became a part of the generally accepted Egyptian creed. But Ra, the cosmic sun-god, was never fitted satisfactorily into the Osirian system—indeed, the worship of Ra outshone all others in the nineteenth dynasty. This composite formation opposed itself continually to the development of any such Osirian monotheism as would have satisfied temporarily the philosophic theorising that so readily accompanies disillusion.

Isis, by reason of her sex, was united easily to the Osirian system, both as wife and sister to Osiris ; but she did not lose her independent importance on this account. On the contrary, in the comparatively modern times after the twenty-sixth dynasty, she became the leading

deity of Egypt, dwarfing even Osiris, much in the same way that the Madonna of the later Middle Ages—whose identity with Isis is hardly to be denied—became for a time the leading deity of Christendom.

The fact that Isis and Madonna have held positions of such commanding distinction in Egypt and in Christendom points to a great evolutionary importance attached to the idea of a mother-goddess; for it is inconceivable that without this importance the psychic illusion in such a deity as Isis could have come to dominate the minds of men through such protracted periods of time. The illusion of a mother-goddess, indeed, has been evolved, both in Egypt and in Italy, into such prominence that, if we regard civilisation as the object for the establishment of which, through psychic illusion, religion exists, we must look upon this particular illusion as a very influential factor in the evolution of civilisation.

We in the twentieth century are apt to look upon the ideal maternity of Isis—or of Madonna—as a poetic or artistic sublimation of a most holy beauty—most holy, not because of faith in the legendary details of myth but, as we suppose, in a more scientific or more philosophic sense. It would be pleasant to

think that it was for some such aesthetic purpose that the Isidian illusion was evolved. Indeed, possibly such a hypothesis could be maintained with some not unconvincing argumentative support. The aesthetic side of life is too real historically to be of quite trivial import in the evolution of civilisation. The production of the more peaceful characteristics of artistic pre-eminence, the cultivation of those more peaceful virtues that seem to be the proper accompaniment of aesthetic excellence, are as much the outcome of evolution as the more obvious martial virtues which we can see so clearly have come into prominent existence in order to lead the community into the desirable condition of material security or hegemony; but we need not attempt to uphold any such paradoxical thesis—as if Isis and Horus were evolved in order that Botticelli and Raphael might paint masterpieces—and that in spite of the fact that the characters of the ancient Egyptians and of the Italians of the fifteenth century are by no means improbable resultants from such a form of evolution. With regard to the latter point, reference might be made to the mild and bloodless character of the Italian wars in the period preceding the invading expedition of Charles VIII (*Symonds*:

Sketches and Studies in Italy and Greece: Fornovo).

But it is safer to look upon this motive of the causes of the development of the Isidian worship and the Madonna cult as merely subsidiary to a simpler but, in fact, deeper reason, which is more in consonance with the ordinary principles of biological evolution—through natural selection, we may say almost, rather than sexual selection. For it seems that Isidian worship—throughout the remainder of this passage the worship of Isis is coupled with the Catholic cult of the Madonna—rose to prominence because of the transcendent importance to the evolution of civilisation of the devoted love of the mother towards her child.

It is in the almost commonplace truism that the mother loves her child that Isidian worship appears to have all its meaning. The worship was evolved in order that the natural mother-love might find a psychic glorification, which would tend to intensify it beyond that natural point in which the human animal is not so very strongly contrasted with the lower animals. We can see with facility how the courage of the timorous hen had to evolve itself, so to speak, into existence for the protection of the chickens, who might not have

survived without it to propagate their kind ; and similar courage was evolved, no doubt, in a similar way in the human mother. But such courageous love was not all that was desirable in her who was to be the mother of civilised man, ancestress of a civilised race ; more than that was desirable : for the sake of this further desirability Isidian worship was evolved, so that the human mother might come to realise the dignity that was put upon her in becoming the mother of a man-child, even as Isis had become the mother of Horus. It was a psychic illusion, no doubt, this divine exemplar of motherhood. It is still a psychic illusion to-day, an illusion that we cherish, every mother's son of us, in our hearts, whether we seek to find an explanation of it in science, or in religion, or in the mere fact that we share still the Isidian illusion of our day.

It is not difficult to see that in the evolution of civilisation the educational potentialities of maternal love might be worth intensification. It was not simply that the love might be extended over a longer period of time, and so afford ampler physical protection to the offspring up to a later period of life ; it was rather that the mother might be influenced by the psychic illusion of an

heavenly example to seize the endless opportunities offered by the chances of daily life to train her child according to the example of the divine Horus.

There is something very modern in this unconscious Egyptian idea of the supreme racial importance of the boy. But with us in the twentieth century, for whom post-Darwinian theories have become the commonplace basis of all philosophic thought, the idea is conscious, scientific, sociological; for them the idea was based upon psychic illusion entirely, for it was only through psychic illusion that the utterly unscientific Egyptian mother could be induced consistently to act in accordance with the principles of evolutionary progress—principles which, through the teachings of our men of science, we are coming slowly to recognise as essential to the advance of a community that seeks for the highest civilisation. For, indeed, if the principle is true, the detection of it does not make any difference to its truth one way or the other. The laws of Nature are eternal, but their codification is trivial, accidental. It is the old Greek notion of Plato of the eternity, the reality, of the “idea,” as opposed to the unreality, the transience, of the particular.

Applying this to the Isidian worship of the mother-goddess, we may see that the "idea" of the perfect motherhood and perfected sonship of Isis and Horus, of Madonna and Il Santissimo Bambino transcends all particularities of local and temporal worship, and, indeed, is immanent in the scheme of the evolution of civilised man. But it is the particularity, and not the universal law, which always has remained as the factor which touched the individual. It is through the individual that evolution has to work, and, therefore, it is the particular motive consonant with the greater universality that has to be evolved in order to make the individual act in consonance with the universal law. There is no need for the individual to realise that his actions are in accordance with any great scheme in order that they may be the suitable actions to accord with the scheme. The essential point is the existence of the particular motive which may induce him to perform the particular evolutionarily desirable act. It is just the production of this motive which evolution is able to bring about; and evolution therefore develops that psychic illusion which can supply the motive. In this way and for this reason was evolved the psychic illusion in the divinity

of Isis, in order that the mothers of Egypt—and ultimately the mothers of Europe—might be swayed by the illusion towards behaviour to their offspring that was in accordance with the training of the young in the way of civilisation.

The importance evolutionarily of this Isidian illusion is shown *a posteriori* by its remarkable historical persistence. It is true that in the earliest periods of Egyptian civilisation Isis did not occupy the pre-eminent position which she came to fill finally in the twenty-sixth dynasty; but still from a very early date she occupied a position of some apparent importance in the somewhat crowded ranks of Egyptian theology; and after the Roman occupation of Egypt her worship spread far beyond the boundaries of Egypt; from then right down to the present time “after a change of name due to the growth of Christianity she has continued to receive the adoration of a large part of Europe” (*Flinders Petrie: Religion of Ancient Egypt*, chap. vi.). Except in the rather sophisticated unity wherein the identity of the same supreme deity is postulated as underlying many varieties of monotheism, there is no form of psychic illusion which has dominated the human mind through such an enormous tract of relatively high civilisation. That some con-

nection exists between this civilisation and Isis-worship is self-evident ; for the notion that the combination is fortuitous would be absurd. The point to be considered is, not the existence of the connection but the rational explanation of it. It appears clear enough that the connection is causative, that the psychic illusion preceded and produced the civilisation—or rather produced a part of the civilisation, while other illusions were engaged similarly in producing the other parts.

In discussing the meaning of the worship of Isis frequent mention has been made of Horus. There are a few points in connection with him which are worthy of separate consideration from our point of view. He has, indeed, a remarkably complex history. Originally Horus was not the son of Isis, but as old a deity as Isis herself. He was a sun-god, and probably was the local divinity of a tribe inhabiting the district round Letopolis. Also there seems to have been another hawk-god of the same name at Edfu. These two became identified, and the combined Horus was worshipped co-equally with Set, the Oriental god of yet another community. But when, as we have seen, the Osiris worshippers, with whom the Set worshippers were at feud, united with the

worshippers of Isis and the worshippers of Horus, it became evolutionarily desirable to amalgamate Osiris, Isis, and Horus into a family in opposition to Set. Horus, then, was not originally inferior to Osiris and Isis, except in so far as the worshippers of Horus may have been inferior to the worshippers of Osiris and Isis. This, therefore, shows us again how important from the evolutionary point of view must have been the establishment of the full power of the psychic illusion of Isis as the mother-goddess; for the great Horus is evolved into the figure of her boy-baby, in which aspect eventually he loses many of his original attributes as a mighty sun-god. Evolution had no need of a second great deity to share the position which Osiris had come to occupy, but it had need of a deity that worthily would complete the picture of Isis as the mother-goddess. For this reason, we may conclude, Horus became the divine child of Isis. Really the analogy is wonderfully close to the evolution of Christ, the almighty God who was crucified on Calvary, into the bambino of the Italian Madonna. Undoubtedly the Egyptian analogy must have assisted largely the promulgation of the Catholic belief.

Ra, the alternative cosmogonic sun-god who has been mentioned above, having failed to find a place in the antagonistic Osirian family, after a few temporary flashes of brilliant splendour has faded long since into the darkness of oblivion, except in so far as he has come through identification with Osiris to share in his all-absorbing monotheistic unity. Horus, on the other hand, has gained what promises to be at any rate a human immortality.

Of the many great Egyptian deities who have not been mentioned in this chapter perhaps the most prominent is Hathor, who is said to be of Phoenician origin, and came in the end to be little more than a variant of Isis ; from our point of view there would be no need to make any comment on the widespread Hathor worship ; for enough has been said above about the mother-goddess in the consideration of the worship of Isis. But there is one point in which Hathor appears to have a remarkable distinction of attribute, and that is in connection with mummification : " the fact of the Hathor-cow being represented as galloping into the unseen world bearing the mummy on her back points to the mummification being part of the religion of Hathor." Whether this conclusion is true historically or not, at any

rate we may consider the philosophy of mummification conveniently under the heading of Hathor-worship; for the custom of mummification was as general in Egypt as the cult of Hathor.

It is quite evident that mummification is not a necessary corollary resulting from a belief in the immortality of the individual, for such a belief has been accepted by almost innumerable communities who have not practised anything approaching to mummification. Flinders Petrie (*Religion and Conscience in Ancient Egypt*, chap. iii.) gives, as a statement of the Egyptian faith "concerning the future state of men, three wholly contradictory theories"; and he adds that "it is probable that the mummy theory is a fourth." We are not concerned here with the interesting historical distinctions between these rival theories; but with regard to the theory of mummification it is to be noted that this theory implies a psychic illusion in the revivification of the body; and this illusion was so deeply rooted in the Egyptian mind that it must have affected the conduct of each man in so far as he believed that the condition of the revived mummy depended on his temporal earthly conduct. Ultimately, in Ptolemaic times, if not earlier,

the mummificatory theory came to coalesce with the "Elysian" theory of the worship of Osiris, to which originally it stood in contradistinction. This coalescence of the theories tended to bring the mummy directly into the moral weighing by Thoth of the immortal being before Osiris, and thus to make the judgment of Osiris the final criterion of the goodness and badness of the conduct of the individual body while alive on earth. Consequently the acceptance of the mummificatory theory would tend to bring about a sanctification of the life of the individual man in accordance with the principles of the Osirian standard. It is interesting as pointing directly to the Christian belief in the resurrection of the body. But the Osirian standard, as has been said already, was not very high; and that seems to be a reason why Osirianism could not produce a very high state of civilisation. It is not unlikely that a more thorough coalescence of the various opposing theories ultimately would have led to the evolution of a higher Osirian standard of conduct, but the political ascendancy of Rome in Egypt, bringing Hellenic disillusion in its train, cut off the possibility of independent Egyptian development; so that the history of Egyptian civilisa-

tion becomes merged in the history of Olympian civilisation, and the history of Egyptian religion has such interest only as it gains from the points which Christianity adopted from it.

CHAPTER II

BUDDHISM

OF the personalities of the founders of the great religions of the world—Christ, Confucius, Mohammed, and the rest—none has a greater charm than that of Siddattha, son of the Raja of Kapila-vastu, called also by his family name of Gotama, whom all the world knows as the Buddha. But, unfortunately, here we are not concerned with his charming personality so much as with the doctrines and teachings that have grown round his name into the religious system of Buddhism.

When first we come to consider the various religions of the world, with reference more especially to the history of the development of civilisation, no point is more disconcerting than the fact that Buddhism appears to fulfil the requirements that seem, according to our theory, to be necessary antecedents of a period of high civilisation and high intellectuality, and

yet Buddhism has not led to any such epoch of brilliant pre-eminence in the history of mankind.

Buddhism has been the accepted religion of countless millions of men. It preaches doctrines that seem to be imbued sufficiently with psychic illusion, and yet the various purely Buddhistic civilisations—if the term may be used in this application—are not remarkable for any great output of intellectuality; they have not produced great art, great literature, great scientific or mechanical achievements.

If Buddhism has preached doctrines which fulfil the conditions that are said in the previous chapters to be the essential precursors of civilisation, and yet has failed to produce the effects which, according to the theory of this book, must ensue from the widespread acceptance of such doctrines, our theory collapses; a single exception would kill it, unless the explanation of the exception can show that it is not real, but merely apparent.

Buddhism is a religion “the infallible diagnostic of which is the belief in the infinite capacity of the human intellect.” The Buddha is intelligence throughout the world. “As the highest form of intelligence is the perfect man, the only object of worship is the

memory of the glorified Buddha" (*G. M. Grant: Religions of the World*, chap. vii.). It is desirable for us to notice carefully that the pure Buddhistic doctrine teaches that the Buddha is beyond the influence of prayer. Indeed, Buddhism, as has been noted often, is an atheistic religion; the god of Buddhism is one the non-existence of whom, as an enduring influential personality, it is the essence of Buddhism to teach. The Buddha, as the perfect man, reached Nirvana, the negation of existence, the position which, according to Buddhism, is the goal at which men ought to aim, and which they reach by perfection.

The theory of Buddhism, thus expressed in almost paradoxical absurdity, seems to us to be lacking singularly in attractiveness; it has had, indeed, very little hold upon the more religious spirits of Europe, attracting perhaps only the atheist or the agnostic, for the psychic illusion of Buddhism is the converse of that of Christianity; instead of an active and intelligent deity, concerned perpetually in all the doings of every man, we find here a passive, uninterested nonentity. Thus the psychic illusion of Buddhism is concentrated for each believer upon himself.

This brings us to the great central doctrine

of Buddhism, the mystery of Karma, by which, through the perpetual cycle of cause and effect, the life of the individual eternally is reborn on the death of the body in some new form of terrestrial existence: "thus a man's social position in life and his physical advantages or the reverse are the result of his actions in a previous birth" (*T. Rhys Davis: Early Buddhism*, chap. vi.). The life has no existence in separation from a body, but it has continuity of individual existence as the active life of successive bodies, until, through perfection, it reaches the final goal of non-existence in Nirvana.

Now here, we may say, is psychic illusion of a sort, the illusion that in some mysterious way the life survives, as an individuality, the death of the body, and becomes the life of some other body, human or animal.

And yet, perhaps, in a more generous sense it is not illusion at all; it is not illusion to say that the life of an individual is the resultant of the previous lives of all his progenitors. That is an obvious biological statement, obvious to us modern men, but by no means obvious to Gotama and his contemporaries, in whom the quasi-detection of this truth is a most remarkable achievement. But there is a flaw in the

statement, because Buddhism "represented the action of past lives on present ones—which is a profound truth—as the action of a past life on a present one in a manner not supported by the facts of experience" (*T. Rhys Davis: Early Buddhism*, chap. vi.).

Thus Gotama taught a psychic illusion which was almost a psychic truth. If he had taught the truth and nothing but the truth, his teaching, it seems, could have had no effect at all upon the evolution of a civilisation, for his literal disciples would have acted exactly in rational accordance with natural biological evolution. Whereas, in order to produce civilisation, irrational, unnatural behaviour is necessary; it is this that differentiates the men who are in a condition of becoming civilised from those who are in a condition of naturally evolved brutish barbarism.

It would follow, then, from this theory that if the Buddha had taught a scientifically true principle of conduct, he would have led his followers merely into a rank disillusion in the ancient beliefs of the Brahmins, and therefore would have reduced them from such height of civilisation as they had reached already. But Buddhism did not have this effect, partly because, as we have seen, even in its purest

form it did not teach a doctrine that was free altogether from error, partly because it did not retain for any length of time its purity except among a few individuals of exceptional intellectual power. The main reason why the pure Buddhistic doctrine could not be accepted generally and unreservedly has been already shown implicitly, for the men who accepted it can have had hardly any psychic illusion to differentiate their conduct; this will have tended towards their elimination, and so to the elimination of their belief, by making each generation tend to occupy a lower plane than the previous generation. We know that, in fact, pure Buddhism has done nothing for the world in spite of its truth—or rather, because of its truth.

It was thus inevitable that Buddhism should lose its purity; it could only live in its primitive verity by contradicting itself and descending into the various puerilities of modern Buddhism scattered through Asia, which are prevented from coming into power by their mutual divergency, as well as by their inherent substratum of truth.

The doctrine of the continued existence of the effects of conduct, which, as we have seen, is so very near the scientific philosophy of

modern Europe, in the primitive Buddhistic teaching easily fell away into a doctrine of the mechanical transmigration of souls. Thus in impure Buddhism, beyond the simpler illusion of the continued existence of the individual life, there is the further, subtler, illusion of the rewards open to the soul as prizes for virtuous behaviour, not, indeed, offered by any personal deity, but self-existent, as the effects of cause ; the supreme reward, of course, is extinction in Nirvana.

It is difficult for us to see that Buddhism by this psychic illusion has tended to lead men in the way of such virtues as the Buddha had preached by the exemplification of his life. Monier Williams (*Buddhism*, p. 551) gives us a long list of the praiseworthy characteristics of Buddhism in its purest and highest form. But the Buddhistic virtues are just those which are of the least communal advantage, which are in the least degree altruistic, and, therefore, they are those virtues of which evolution has been able to make the least use in leading men towards the goal of the highest civilisation. They are individual virtues, not communal ; they are selfish virtues, not altruistic ; they are interesting virtues to the man who practises them, where—if we postulate

civilisation as the goal at which religion aims through evolution—they should be uninteresting. Now, it is just here that the psychic illusion of Buddhism appears to differ diametrically from the psychic illusions of Europe, amongst which Christianity, of course, must be classed; we have seen how communal were the psychic illusions that inspired the ancient Romans to their peculiar virtues. Less obviously, but no less actually, the Christian virtues are communal.

Further, it is open theoretically to a man to be a perfect Buddhist in complete isolation. It is not possible for a man—unless perhaps he be already a priest—to be a perfect Catholic in isolation. Not only ideally but practically, Catholicism demands that a congregation should be gathered together.

If we reflect upon this theoretic potential isolation of the good Buddhist, we can grasp without much difficulty the reason of the fact that evolution could not extract from Buddhism the highest results of civilisation. Psychic illusion is there, but the wrong kind of psychic illusion. The birth of Buddhistic civilisation is abortive, and, therefore, incapable of the highest development. It is not because Buddhism holds out as its highest award the

extinction in Nirvana, while Christianity holds out the more alluring prospect of an eternity of bliss ; for clearly evolution, which has overcome so many more subtle mental difficulties, could have produced the belief that the one is as attractive a prospect as the other ; to very many extinction has been, and is, an attractive prospect ; it is rather because the virtues which Buddhism inculcates are the virtues of the individual, the virtues which Christianity, especially Catholic Christianity, teaches consistently are the virtues of the group, of the Church, and so, in the universality of the psychic illusion, of the community.

Gotama did not make it his aim primarily to free men from sin ; what he desired rather was to free them from the misery which, according to him, was inherent in ignorance of truth. Therefore Buddhism does not tend initially to teach a high moral code—incidentally it has taught such a code frequently. Where Christianity at its best—however far it fell below this ideal standard—made it almost a point of honour for the believer to keep himself as far as possible worthy of his future communion with his personal God, Buddhism made no such appeal, for the motives of the Buddhist are entirely selfish ; his goal is to

obtain the blessing of Nirvana, without reference to any personal deity such as that before whose ideal purity the Christian believes that he will have to stand naked and ashamed.

Indeed, the psychic illusion of an active personal deity is inwrought so closely into our European minds that we have difficulty in realising how a spiritual system worthy of the name of a religion can exist without it. We can realise an irreligious atheism easily enough, but hardly a religious atheism ; yet that is the anomaly that we find in pure Buddhism.

Buddhistic doctrine, also, has encouraged the believer to isolate himself in unsocial meditation to an extent that has prevented the evolution of those social opinions by which co-operatively communal progress is made possible. It is true that such meditative contemplation does not seem to be alien to the spirit of mediaeval Catholic Christianity, which yet produced so glorious a civilisation. But in Christendom the meditative life was confined in practice to the priesthood. In Buddhist countries there has been no such limitation. Each and every Buddhist, in working out his ascent to Nirvana, is guided by the same motives and rules of conduct. Consequently, that which in Christendom has been sporadic

has been general in Buddhist lands, and has affected anti-socially the whole body of believers.

Individual progress towards civilisation in isolation is inconceivable; social progress always must overlie the personal progress of each man, and social progress is just that which no possible distribution of evolutionary productiveness can extract from pure and isolated meditation, however exalted may be the intellectuality involved in the process. It is not impossible that a limited amount of the meditative spirit may be advantageous to a community by leading towards an increased intelligence, and also as tending to strengthen psychic illusions; but any general acceptance of the meditative life as the universal ideal of the members of a community must tend towards an anti-social view of existence, which, by weakening communal bonds, will lead actually to a lowering of intellectuality.

Celibacy has been taught by Buddhism as the highest condition of human life. It is hardly necessary to comment on the obvious impossibility of the continued existence without extraneous recruiting of a community of celibates. But there is the further point, that the acceptance in a community of the doctrine

literally, even by a small proportion of its members, must tend by heredity towards the elimination of a belief in the doctrine ; for such men will leave no descendants to inherit their barren aspect of life. Therefore, if the doctrine of celibacy has any civilising effect upon a community, the effect cannot be of persistent magnitude. Catholicism only advocates the doctrine of the celibacy of the priest, which is a very different matter from the general celibacy that, as a counsel of perfection, underlies Buddhistic teaching.

It has been remarked above that Buddhism is a peculiarly selfish religion. That is a very obvious piece of criticism. Indeed, with regard to it, we may say that every religion in a sense is selfish—selfish, that is, in its ultimate energising motives of action. Christianity thus is selfish in that each Christian seeks ultimately his own personal salvation.

In this argument the identity—if it exists—of the ultimate bases of religious motive is of very little importance to us in comparison with the visible results in practice. From this latter aspect Buddhism is selfish where Christianity is altruistic. Therefore Buddhism works for the improvement of the individual—which is not civilisation, and cannot become civilisa-

tion—where Christianity works for the communal improvement—which always tends to become civilisation ; and so here again we see a reason why Buddhism has produced no period of civilisation for ever memorable in the history of mankind.

Buddhism has not even produced isolated men of remarkable ability—although the argument does not seem to exclude such a possibility—because the isolation of genius, as we know from the general history of civilisation, is inconceivable. The man of genius always is the son of the civilisation that sways the minds of the men around him. He is merely the exponent, the fortunate exponent, of the far greater social intellectuality. What he has said or done had to be said or done somehow by some one. It is the genius of the age that speaks or acts through the individual. We know that a Buonarotti or a Shakespeare could not have flourished, say, in the tenth century, for they are typical sons of the civilisation that produced them, and that civilisation was not in existence in the tenth century. But when the civilisation did come, it was bound to find an outlet for its intellectuality somewhere ; it found it, almost incidentally we may say, in these two individuals.

Similarly, with regard to Buddhistic intellectuality, it would be folly to suppose for one moment that the casual individual could give utterance to great ideas, could perform mighty actions, when the social spirit of civilisation was not alive around him, and instinct with the living radiance of a communal intelligence. Buddhism, being anti-social, as we have seen, has failed to produce the conditions of communal intellectuality in civilisation that are necessary for the exposition of individual men of genius, and therefore the attempts to educate such individuals, which the spirit of Buddhism may be said to have been making through evolution, have been in fact fruitless.

In these desultory remarks upon the effects of Buddhism as they appear to a casual observer, we have confined ourselves to the general principles of Buddhistic teaching, and have avoided studiously any deviations into the particularities of existent Buddhism. Actually Buddhism has branched off into remarkably divergent ramifications, but they are so numerous that any attempt to discuss their details would be clearly beyond our purpose. It seems better to leave these general remarks in their present indeterminate vagueness.

But the failure of evolution to extract any

real civilisation from Buddhism, in spite of the numerous attempts to do so, which evidently it has made in producing these many divergent types of Buddhistic doctrine, is in itself of considerable interest to us. For if the production of civilisation from Buddhism were possible, then these divergent types, we may presume, would never have come into existence—at any rate, they would not have attained to such an advanced state of divergency as, in fact, they have reached to-day. Evolution would have detected the desirable variation, and the particular variety then would have proved prepotent for the elimination of the other less desirable variations. It would have become the orthodox Buddhism, as contrasted with heretical divergencies. Orthodoxy must not be taken to mean any rigid conservation of the purest principles of the founder of Buddhism. Rather it is orthodoxy as it has been evolved in the history of the Christian Church, by no means the same thing as a literal realisation of the earliest Christian type. In this sense no existing branch of Buddhism has any right to claim for itself the title of orthodox. Buddhism, indeed, never has come into a position similar to that of Christianity at the time when the adolescent Catholicism

was stifling out of existence the heresies of divergent forms of faith in Western Europe.

And therefore we can see that evolution has been unable to find the necessary variation in Buddhism.

This only brings us back to our former conclusion, that Buddhism is not capable of generating civilisation.

CHAPTER III

ISLAM

THE history of Mohammedanism ought to give us a very obvious example of the civilising effects of psychic illusion, because it provides for our consideration "the strange spectacle of a religion coming into being in the clear light of day." It is worth our while, therefore, to try to see why Mohammedanism failed to produce the highest form of civilisation. Also we may try to grasp the connection between the illusion and the form of civilisation which has been resultant actually from it.

Mohammed was born in Mecca about A.D. 571. At that date the religious beliefs of the Arabs were vaguely polytheistic. There was no hierarchical system of faith accepted by the people with sufficient generality to deserve the name of an Arabian religion. The local variations of belief were excessive. Con-

sequently the effects of psychic illusion upon conduct in any locality were counteracted constantly by opposing effects in neighbouring districts. It is this lack of homogeneity that so often prevents illusions, which in themselves are sufficiently irrational and otherwise not unsuitable to produce a system of civilisation, from having the great effects upon human history that we might have anticipated. This lack of homogeneity, and the local jealousies entailed by it, must have tended, also, towards a large amount of scepticism, because each visit of an individual to a neighbouring town or tribal community must have led him to entertain the potentialities of doubt as to the truth of the illusions which he had accepted and his neighbour had rejected.

The sceptical irreverence of the mass of the Arabs had a great effect upon the mind of Mohammed in his younger days. It led him definitely to reject polytheism, and retain only a faith in Allah, who had been known for a long time to the polytheistic Arabs as the nominal, but unapproachable, supreme God. It is of no consequence in our present inquiry whether Allah can be identified with Jehovah through the Hanifite movement and Jewish Essenism or Christian asceticism. The all-

important point for us is that Mohammed, by rejecting any form of polytheism and embracing the monotheistic worship of Allah, came into possession of a simple and satisfactory faith which, through his consummate genius, could give the homogeneity of a universally accepted psychic illusion to the disparate polytheistic Arabs.

Now the worship of Allah, as we have said already, was an old-established part of the existent Arabian polytheism ; so that Mohammedanism, if it had been content to teach merely the worship of Allah, would not have gained the universal consideration of the Arabs. Mohammed preached more than the worship of Allah : an essential part of the Mohammedan creed lies in the psychic illusion of the divine guidance of the prophet himself. It is this additional statement apparently that has produced Mohammedan civilisation, or, at any rate, led to its extended influence after the death of Mohammed. It gave just that desirable humanity to the pure monotheistic teaching of Mohammed himself—for it is well known that Mohammed expressly forbade his followers to look upon him as influencing Allah on their behalf after his death.

Monotheism in itself is not a stimulating

form of faith—Christianity found this, and therefore evolved saint-worship. The Mohammedan creed has remained always of an unbending transcendentalism. Whatever Mohammed personally taught or wished to teach, in actual fact his followers made a second or intermediary divinity of the prophet. If faith in Mohammedanism was to dominate large numbers of men, it was necessary that some personal myths should centre round Mohammed to give that psychic illusion which hardly could be excited by the pure worship of Allah even in the desert—it was Renan who said that the desert was monotheistic. So we find the story of the voice on Mount Hira. It is of no importance to us whether Mohammed, in the course of some cataleptic seizure or as the result of prolonged and solitary fasting, really believed that he heard the voice, “Thou art the messenger of God and I am Gabriel. . . .” The point of interest is that Mohammed said that he did believe, and persuaded Khadijeh to believe with him, and eventually the whole Mohammedan world.

For twenty years after the affair of Mount Hira, in Mecca and Medina Mohammed declared that revelation came to him constantly. Those who believed him placed themselves

under the influence of the psychic illusion of the personal interest of Allah through Mohammed in their affairs. It was, indeed, the crucial point, during the lifetime of Mohammed, that believers should accept the illusion of the existence of Allah, who concerned himself with the doings of Mohammed, and of those who accepted Mohammed as a prophet; for it was this illusion that led them to neglect every other thought, in the belief that they were fulfilling the fate preordained by Allah.

Mohammedanism taught the psychic illusion of the continuance of life after death, and we have noted the importance of this in considering how the Dionysiac cult gave new vigour to the Homeric Olympianism, and, again, when Christianity was growing up inside the decadence of Greco-Roman Olympianism.

The doctrine of predestination—*Kismet*: "It is fate"—is accepted as one of the distinguishing traits of the Mohammedan religion; we might be inclined to suppose that the full application of this doctrine in the motives of conduct would annul the results of free action; but such an outlook upon Mohammedan fatalism is really superficial. No doctrine, no form of belief can destroy the common basis of humanity that is inherent in all men, in

Mohammedan Arabs as much as in us. The Mohammedan has as much freedom of thought as all other men. The fact that he uses this freedom very largely in denying his freedom of intellectual action does not show that the freedom does not exist; on the contrary, the denial of freedom intellectually can be made only by one who, in fact, has the freedom to deny that he has the necessary freedom to deny. If a man uses his freedom of thought to deny that he possesses freedom of thought, *ipso facto* he gives the lie to his denial. It follows, then, that the power of Allah, which each Mohammedan claims to be the controlling guide of his conduct, obtains its ultimate sanction from such intellectual potentiality as the believer himself possesses: that is, each man arranges his conduct as actually seems best to himself. The universality of the entire faith in the personal controlling power of Allah produces that wonderful unanimity of conduct which has made Mohammedanism so powerful a factor in the history of the world during the last twelve hundred years.

After the Hegira, or flight to Medina, A.D. 622, Mohammed seems to have taken upon himself more completely the rôle of the prophet

inspired by the direct spoken commands of Allah. This must have tended to strengthen greatly the psychic illusion in the reality of the personal interest of Allah in the doings of the faithful; and also it must have led to an increase in the illusion of the divine origin of the teaching of Mohammed, which would be all in favour of that unquestioning obedience to the expressed commands of the prophet. The personality and the example of the great man, also, seem in themselves to have been able to inspire obedience during his lifetime; but after his death it must have been psychic illusion alone that kept his followers from swerving from the appointed path. Also the early successes of Mohammedans on the battlefield, when opposed to the legions of the Roman empire and the forces of Chosroes of Persia, all must have tended to deepen the psychic illusion in the divine origin of Mohammedan teaching.

Apart from its military power, the resultant Mohammedan civilisation is distinguished for its brilliant successes in mathematical and metaphysical science—it is simply impossible to conceive, as has been noted by other writers, that our modern Christian civilisation could exist without the Arabic numerals. As we have

seen already, in considering the Olympian, the Catholic, and the Protestant civilisations, monotheistic illusions seem to be productive of scientific intellectuality, while polytheistic illusions tend to lead to a civilisation remarkable for literary and artistic achievements. In this respect Mohammedan civilisation does not differ from the resultants of the other psychic illusions. Pure Mohammedanism, like pure Protestantism, is eminently monotheistic ; and its resultant civilisation is eminently in-artistic : in architecture alone of the arts has Mohammedanism produced any masterpieces ; and architecture is, after all, the most utilitarian of the arts.

Protestantism, on the other hand, has remained far from pure in its monotheism, being brought constantly, as we have seen, into contact with the closely related polytheistic Catholicism. It is this purity of its monotheism that has prevented the Mohammedan civilisation from rising to the many-sided grandeur of Protestant civilisation. Also, the Protestant civilisation, being chronologically the later, has had the advantage of being able to learn a few things from Mohammedan civilisation, especially in mathematics and metaphysics. The Mohammedan civilisation did

not take that mechanical turn which is so remarkable in our Protestant civilisation. Perhaps we may account for this great point of difference by purely physical reasons, which have nothing to do with psychic illusion ; geologically, the country in the neighbourhood of Mecca is not rich superficially in the minerals that are necessary for mechanical eminence ; while the English, who have been the pioneers of mechanical progress, have in their country a land that is peculiarly endowed with them. England, too, as we have remarked, holds a unique position in the history of Protestant civilisation. However that may be, for some reason or other the Mohammedan civilisation, in spite of its advanced theoretical science, did not show signs of any special mechanical inventiveness.

The exclusiveness which is so intimate a part of the Mohammedan faith also tended to prevent the faithful from entering upon the heritage incidentally prepared for them by civilised polytheists outside the bounds of Islam. To Mohammedanism this must have been a heavy handicap in the race towards the goal of civilisation, where the other competitor was the Protestant monotheism, which always has enjoyed the blessings produced by

the adjoining Catholic polytheism in those very things which pure Protestantism hardly could have produced for itself.

Much of the early military success of Mohammedanism was due to the weakness of its opponents ; and this weakness, as we have said above, was due to the decadence of Roman Olympianism, which was in the full stream of its downward course while Mohammedanism was rising to power. There was no great internal influence which Mohammedanism had to counteract, such as met Christianity in the disillusionment of Roman Olympianism. Thus Mohammedanism, though so much later in origin than Christianity, was able to bring Mohammedan civilisation to such perfection as was possible inherently for it at a time when the decay of Olympianism was still too powerful within the Roman empire to permit for Christianity any noticeable resultant effects in civilisation. Thus from the middle of the eighth to the middle of the thirteenth century, as Renan declares, the Moslem world was superior to the Christian world in intellectual culture. The ultimate triumph of the Christian civilisation depends essentially on the fact that Christianity was working upon material prepared for cultivation by Roman Olympianism,

? upon brain-material which possessed an hereditary latent potentiality of civilisation that was lacking almost entirely in the Arabs and early Mohammedans.

There are three prominent assertions in the Mohammedan psychic illusion : (i) that Allah is the only God ; (ii) that Mohammed is the prophet of Allah ; (iii) that Allah through Mohammed promises a second life of bliss after death to the faithful. Of these three assertions the first two have no great civilising power in themselves. Perhaps the chief result achieved by them, and for the sake of which they were evolved into prominence, was the establishment of utter uniformity of belief so that the third form of psychic illusion, faith in the promise of future bliss, might have its full effect. For the greater the homogeneity of an illusion, the greater its power of affecting the conduct of large masses of men. We know historically that, on the whole, homogeneity has been a constant characteristic of Mohammedanism. The Mohammedan creed is of a supreme simplicity, a simplicity that would be impossible in a natural religion like Olympianism ; and this, again, has tended to keep Mohammedanism homogeneous, because any variation from the primitive simplicity was

to be seen at once, and was condemned forthwith as heretical.

We may say, then, that faith in the unity of Allah is not a doctrine of supreme importance as a civilising agent : it is merely a most desirable subsidiary doctrine, evolved in order to aid in the promulgation of the third distinctive doctrine of Islam, that Allah through Mohammed promises eternal bliss after life to the faithful. In discussing other religious systems we have dwelt upon the importance of the psychic illusion in immortality, showing that such an illusion affects the conduct of believers, giving an exciting motive to each individual, urging him towards altruistic conduct in every action of life. Every Mohammedan *qua* Mohammedan, in effect, asks himself before every action whether his conduct is about to be in accordance with the precepts of the Koran. The simplicity of the Mohammedan creed makes the application of this test in ordinary life an easier matter than we might have expected. Also the homogeneity of Mohammedanism makes the answers to such questions singularly free from variation, so that the whole Mohammedan world in many simple, constantly recurring circumstances of daily life has acted with uniformity.

The effect of this upon racial development must have been great. The nature of the effect depends on the internal quality of the particularities of Mohammedan teaching. We are not concerned here so much with *a priori* considerations of the expediency of Mohammedan morality ; we have rather to remember that such moral conduct has been proved, by its success up to a certain point, to be expedient.

The highest civilisation produced by Mohammedanism is not of commanding importance in the history of the world. It is inferior, certainly, to the highest forms of Olympian civilisation. But, reaching its greatest brilliance at the time when Europe was passing through the dark period between Olympianism and the glories of the Catholic civilisation, the Mohammedan civilisation seems to shine with a splendour that for the most part is due to contrast.

It may be said that Mohammedan civilisation largely is incidental, that it is due to the political extension of Mohammedan power. This extension, it seems, was caused in no small degree by the proselytism taught so insistently by Mohammedanism, and, also, directly by the psychic illusion in the reality of the paradisaic

rewards that awaited the believer if he were killed in fighting for the advance of Islam. This is an aspect of the third statement mentioned above. The simplicity of this psychic illusion made it peculiarly effective in influencing men, especially in influencing them to action that tended towards Mohammedan political advantage. But it is hard to see that it is effective directly in civilising men, that it is conducive to intellectual progress. It lacks the gradations of rewards for which Catholicism made satisfactory allowance in the psychic illusion of purgatory. The Mohammedan result is an uncompromising dichotomy.

But Mohammedan illusions were singularly effective in carrying the arms of the faithful to success; and it seems probable that here we see once again that, when material security is ensured, civilisation of a sort tends to increase.

CHAPTER IV.

CONFUCIANISM

THE records of the primitive religious beliefs of the Chinese are so vague and legendary that it is not possible for us to found any convincing argument upon them: we can do little more than declare the existence of an early monotheistic faith, which we may presume preceded the beginnings of Chinese civilisation.

In the long period of the Chou dynasty (B.C. 1122-255) this earlier monotheism seems to have been developed into a more polytheistic and anthropomorphic illusion—a faith which, as we have seen so often, leads to a higher form of civilisation. Thus Hou Chi, the ancestor of the House of Chou, was worshipped as the “Associate of God”; and the emperor Shen Nung was deified as a sort of Chinese Ops, a god of agricultural labour. And sacrifices were made to many other spirits. Thus with

the increase of psychic illusion came the increase of civilisation.

At the same time there seems to have arisen that curious limitation which, as it appears, is of very great importance in the development of Chinese civilisation, the limitation to the emperor alone, as Son of Heaven, of the power of sacrificing to God and to Earth. The importance of this is twofold. It stimulated a psychic illusion in the right of the emperor to unquestioning obedience from his subjects: to this further reference will be made. Also it reduced the psychic illusion of the popular belief in the real personality of a deity by separating ordinary people from unreserved communion with heaven. This must have tended to weaken the influence of the supreme psychic illusion upon the conduct of men by cutting them off from personal participation in the direct intercourse between the individual and his deity. No doubt, for a reason that we do not know, the increase of the authority of the emperor must have been at some period of such evolutionary importance that the establishment of the psychic illusion of his "divine right" was worth evolving in spite of the unsatisfactory fact that it entailed at the same time the establishment also of a secondary—and almost

a disqualifying—illusion. It reminds one of the evolution through sexual selection of beautiful but cumbersome plumage in many birds, which must be, beyond doubt, a serious hindrance to their flight in their ordinary movements, which to us might seem to be more important, for the sake of an ulterior and quite essential purpose. Similarly the evolution of a straightforward psychic illusion in some heavenly guidance might seem to us to be the more important: but to the spirit of evolution, so to speak, on the contrary, it was even worth while to sacrifice some part of this for the sake of establishing a divine right in the authority of the emperor, which appears to us far less essential than the confirmation of spiritual faith. But, in the final outcome, it seems that China has lost more by the limitation which weakened the pure psychic illusions of Chinamen than she has gained by any increase of political illusion. Every observer remarks upon the materialistic utilitarianism of the average Chinaman, and this utilitarianism is one of the most marked features of the teachings of Confucius (B.C. 551-478), to which we may now turn.

Of all the great religions of the world Confucianism is the least religious; that

is, it makes the least claim of a revealed heavenly guidance. Confucius never claimed that he was more than an ordinary man, whose object was to lay before his countrymen the examples of former men as guides to their present conduct. The strength and the weakness of Confucianism both lie concealed in this negation of spiritual guidance. The Confucian civilisation is weak in that it is lowly, that it never has risen, and in itself never can rise, to great heights ; for Confucianism teaches almost none of that psychic illusion which can inspire conduct opposed to personal interest in favour of communal progress. It is strong because, in mounting only to a lowly level, it is clear largely of the possibilities of disillusion, and consequent decadence. Where the European civilisations in the past have risen to greater heights they have fallen again ; while Confucianism has pursued the easy level path, which, though it never had led Chinamen to the heights which Europeans have trodden, has saved them at any rate from such depths of anarchy as we read of in the histories of the first centuries of the ages of faith in Europe.

And yet Confucianism did teach a little faith in illusion ; otherwise it would have preached

lessons to which men soon would have paid no attention, because it would have given no motive for any altruistic behaviour. It did this, not so much by claiming divine guidance for its founder as by pointing behind him, vaguely enough, to predecessors who had received revelations from some deity. Confucius himself claimed to be no more than a student of these somewhat misty predecessors, whose doctrines and precepts he taught. Still, the Chinese treat Confucius as a more than human character; they offer incense, fruit, wine, before a tablet on which prayers to Confucius are written. Here we see that little piece of psychic illusion which has given a necessary motive for impersonal conduct. The universality of this worship paid to Confucius throughout China produced the catholicity of motive which alone could have enabled so small a tinge of psychic illusion to colour so large a field. Confucianism has given to China her extraordinary unity.

Confucius, too, by preaching very emphatically the former existence of a golden age when everybody was virtuous, was adding a subsidiary illusion, which, though apparently almost universal throughout the world as a basis of religion, and so of civilisation, seems

actually to have had more influence in China than elsewhere. For Confucius claimed that, by obedience to the principles which he taught, an immediate return to the primitive felicity might be secured. He was thus led to lay emphasis on the political aspect of religious conduct. There appears to be no way in which motives for conduct that was not self-seeking could be found here except under the impulse of some form of psychic illusion. It is the poverty, however, of this illusion that has kept China from rising above her present lowly level of civilisation.

When we look more closely into the details of the Confucian system, we see again that illusion is kept as far as possible from the hearts of the people by the rule that the worship of a supreme deity is to be performed by the emperor alone on behalf of himself and of his subjects. In theory the worship of ancestors alone is permitted to the ordinary Confucianist.

In practice, of course, endless superstitions are countenanced: but their heterogeneity nullifies their influence to a great extent: they are not systematised by Confucianism. A catholicity of belief, as we have seen so often elsewhere, is necessary to bring about the

greatest results of psychic illusion. In so far as it is catholic, Confucianism teaches no great amount of psychic illusion : in so far as it does not forbid superstitions that are capable of giving the desirable quantity of illusion, Confucianism is not catholic.

Confucius taught that heaven, by fixing spiritual laws to the performance of every social function, had defined once and for all the proper natural relations of man. From our present point of view this is important only from the illusion that it was some heavenly power that had arranged such matters, because it implies the existence of the psychic illusion which ultimately must underlie every religion, even the practical utilitarianism of Confucianism.

It was taught insistently by Confucius that the emperor is the "Son of Heaven," and this doctrine of his brought psychic illusion to bear closely upon his utilitarian politics. We can use the title very glibly, as though it were, in fact, nothing more than a conventional title ; but it seems Confucianism intends believers really to mean something definite by it. Thus disobedience of the emperor is for the Confucian sin against heaven. This psychic illusion, if once accepted, unreservedly, might

come without doubt to have enormous political significance in the hands of a clever and not over-scrupulous emperor. Historically such power seems, for the most part, to have descended into the hands of chancellors. Philosopher-kings are rare. But the illusion of "divine right," when brought into practical politics as the teaching of Confucius brings it, opens enormous possibilities of personal power. Applying exactly the same principle to the individual, Confucius made reason emperor of the mind of each man, and established this principle under the psychic illusion of the divine inspiration of reason within each individual, which was to guide him upon the way of righteousness.

Confucianism has never produced a really great man. When one thinks of the vast population of China, and the remarkable liberality of its choice of officials by competitive examination, the dearth of commanding personalities, indeed, may seem surprising: but, in fact, it ought not to surprise us: such great men do not arise, as it were, by chance in any part of the world. They are all sons of their environment. It is not the quantity but the quality of the material that is of supreme importance in their making. Confucianism is

not an inspiring creed because it teaches so little psychic illusion: men are not inspired by it to the irrational magnificent actions which foreshadow a coming period of intellectuality. So we find no great period of intellectuality in the history of Chinese civilisation. There is merely a long wearisome succession of tolerably intelligent officials. The motive of a high intellectuality is lacking in Confucianism, because psychic illusion to such a great extent is lacking. So it seems that Confucianism in itself cannot lead to that sudden expansion of intellectuality in China which some people in Europe seem to dread, as the coming of a Yellow Peril. Before our European civilisation has to meet that danger, it will be necessary for China to find an enlarged psychic illusion. It is conceivable that this new illusion may be evolved from Confucianism, much in the way that Christianity was evolved from Judaism: but the parallel is not close; and there are no signs at present of any such evolution—none, at any rate, that are obvious to those who know nothing of the internal economy of the Chinese empire.

Although Confucianism is the accepted religion of vast numbers of Chinese, we must remember that the teaching of Confucius does

not stand alone in China. Buddhism, since its introduction in the third century B.C., has had a very strong hold upon large sections of the population. Buddhism in China is a very different thing from the pure Buddhism that we considered in Chapter II. For here, as for the most part elsewhere, it became debased; no doubt this happened so that evolution by an increase of psychic illusion might develop from it the germs of an incipient civilisation, which, as we have seen, are hardly to be found where the teachings of Gotama remain in their philosophic purity. As we have discussed Buddhism already, here we need only say that it appears probable that, in so far as Buddhism can be said to have influenced China as a whole, it has tended towards civilisation, by preaching psychic illusion of a sort where that was lacking peculiarly in Confucianism.

Similarly Taoism has added some desirable illusions in China. The teachings of Lao Tsu are philosophic: their appeal is to the disillusioned, who, after giving up even the limited superstitions of Confucianism, yet could accept the remote unity of the Tao as a "First Cause." In practice very numerous superstitions have grown up round the doctrines of Lao Tsu:

Taoists appear to have developed psychic illusion in spite of the fact that Taoism came into existence in order to deny the influence of all psychic illusions.

It is difficult to understand the position of those Chinese who succeed in combining Confucianism with Buddhism ; but, at any rate, it is clear that the resultant illusion must be largely arbitrary : so that here we see the failure of the necessary universality of a psychic illusion that is to produce great results.

There can be no doubt that Confucianism as a religion has not led to great results in civilisation, in spite of the vast numbers who have accepted its teaching for a protracted period of time. It is of great interest to the man who accepts the religious causation of all civilisation to note that the one thing lacking for the building up of a great civilisation in China has been universal acceptance of a psychic illusion which Confucianism did not teach. It is a negative argument in favour of the necessity of psychic illusion for the production of civilisation ; and it has, no doubt, the usual weakness of negative arguments. But analogically there is support for our theory in the study of Confucianism.

CHAPTER V

ANCIENT MEXICO AND PERU

FROM the point of view of our theory it is unfortunate that Columbus discovered America, at the end of the fifteenth century. In the first place, his enterprising achievement would take a much more convenient place in the course of the Protestant civilisation than it occupies as one of the very great triumphs of the Catholic civilisation. For the artistic civilisation that resulted from Catholicism was not naturally prolific of such exploits. The adventure might have seemed to belong more fittingly to some date a couple of centuries or so later, when the scientific and mechanical Protestant civilisation was coming into power. Of course, it is easy to find sufficient explanation of the phenomenon in the increase of general intellectuality which was the necessary concomitant of artistic pre-eminence.

From a very different point of view the

enterprise of Columbus also must be regretted by us, because it brought about the ruin of the two native civilisations of America, by opening the eyes of the Spaniards to the golden glories of Mexico and Peru.

In the year 1519, when Cortes reached the shores of the Mexican empire, the Aztecs had attained to a degree of culture to which we can hardly refuse the name of civilisation. This civilisation had been developed in an independence that was isolated completely ; that is, the three States of Mexico, Tezcucó, and Tlacopan, which dominated the affairs of Anahuac, had developed their culture without extraneous help, although evidently their closely related civilisations had affected one another mutually.

Now the isolation of this group of advancing communities made it possible for them to work out in practice an "ideal" civilisation, to which the civilisations of the old world can give us no historical parallel. This is not the place to discuss the possibilities of pre-Columbian intercourse between America and Europe or Asia. For us here, certainly, the Mexican civilisation may be considered indigenous, for the racial connection that it appears to be possible to trace between the American Indian and the Asiatic Mongol is quite archaic.

The ruined cities of Yucatan point to the existence of some civilisation which preceded by a long period—the length of the period, indeed, is a mere matter of speculation—the civilisation that Cortes found in Mexico. This earlier period of civilisation was connected most probably with the later growth of Mexican civilisation ; but the connection historically is lost. Indeed, for us from our present point of view, the Aztec civilisation was a primitive civilisation. Perhaps it had not, in fact, many civilised precursors in its national ancestry.

Now this “ideal” civilisation might have been of quite absorbing interest to the student of the philosophic development of history. It is true that we could never, unseen, have watched it developing itself from barbarism through an adolescent culture to the strenuous manhood of its highest cultivation, and passing from that height down the normal stages of decadence into senility. But at least we might have hoped to obtain a clear, distinct view of that one period at which the conquerors came into contact with it four hundred years ago ; we might have hoped that the Europeans, who had advanced so much farther upon the road of civilisation, would have preserved with scrupulous care every record that the Aztec

culture had stored in its hieroglyphic archives of the history of its people. But unhappily such hopes are not realised. Juan de Zumarraga, the first archbishop of Mexico, gathered the priceless picture-manuscripts from every quarter of Anahuac into a "mountain-heap," and burned them publicly. And so we have to be content with such historical notices as we possess—especially the writings of Sahagun and Ixtlilxochitl.

Now, let us consider the psychic illusions of the Aztecs. The Aztecs recognised the existence of a supreme Creator and Lord of the universe (*Prescott: Conquest of Mexico*, book i. chap. iii.). Beneath this somewhat vague and very far-distant Father Omnipotent was a group of thirteen leading, and numerous minor, deities, "mostly deifications," as Spence says (*Mythologies of Mexico and Peru*, chap. ii.), "of his attributes." It would seem that the illusion of the All-father was not of special importance in the evolution of Mexican civilisation. At any rate, the potent deities, who guided the growth of Aztec civilisation as we know it, are not to be held, in any individual case, as occupying a position of almighty sovereignty. The Mexican religion is thoroughly polytheistic.

The deity in whom the psychic illusion of the people appears to have been developed most highly was Huitzilopochtli, the war-god. No doubt it was their complete faith in this deity that gave the necessary illusion which enabled the Aztecs to seize and hold their commanding position in Anahuac—for it seems that they brought their faith in Huitzilopochtli with them when first they came into that region. As far as that is concerned the position is exactly similar to the ancient Roman faith in Bellona and Mars with Jupiter titularly supreme in the background—unreserved psychic illusion in personal war gods. Such illusion must be of enormous value to a primitive people in fighting against those in whom such illusion is non-existent or weaker.

Again, Huitzilopochtli gave an illusion that was of importance to the community rather than to the individual; and this tallies exactly with the fact that Huitzilopochtli was a deity in whom the illusion was established before the Aztec dominance of Anahuac.

The worship of Huitzilopochtli is notorious for the horrible bloodshed connected with the human sacrifices offered to him in almost incredible numbers—seventy thousand victims, we are told, were slaughtered at the dedication

of his great temple in A.D. 1486. But, putting sentiment aside, we may see, without much trouble, that the unsentimental spirit of Mexican evolution was the gainer by the destruction of foes who were not imbued with the illusion of the reality of Huitzilopochtli. That, in fact, is the important point—the elimination, whether in war or by sacrifice, of those who failed to accept the illusion so as to leave room for the growth and expansion of the community whose members were imbued by it fully.

The fact that there was revolting cruelty and cannibalism bound up with the ritual of the worship of Huitzilopochtli must not blind us to the possibility that his worship may have been, nevertheless, a civilising factor. Really we ought to distinguish very clearly between our criticism of the internal features of this form of religious belief—indeed of all forms of religious belief—and our estimate of the external value of it. The “internal” criticism is subjective, and has its interest almost entirely in the subjective condition of the criticising mind, as influenced by the psychic illusions under whose influence it has been formed. Thus such criticism—it is apt to be sentimental—is, in this case, a critical estimate,

or criterion, of the contemporary Christian civilisation which inspires such critical feelings. It cannot be a veritable criticism of the worship of Huitzilopochtli : with regard to that it would be merely an interesting opinion. Sentimental feelings are here not out of place.

But when we turn to the "external" side of our consideration of the worship of Huitzilopochtli, the estimate that we can make of it then is a very different matter. We are concerned no longer with the outraged feelings that so completely fill our minds when we think of the repulsive cruelties that attended the human sacrifices ; we turn rather to the effects that appear to have resulted from the psychic illusion in the reality of Huitzilopochtli upon the development of the believers in it. From this point of view the horrors of his worship may appear desirable, as conducive to civilisation.

If we banish all sentimental bias from our estimate, we are left only with the consideration whether the cult of Huitzilopochtli was leading his worshippers towards the favourable differentiation which is a step towards civilisation. It seems indeed that his worship must have had the effect of differentiating favourably those who believed in it from disbelieving

neighbours, by increasing irrational courage and a scorn of death. Where the faith in Huitzilopochtli was strong enough his worshippers must have fought with complete self-abandonment and disregard of their own lives against their enemies, and this must have tended to increase the power of the Aztecs.

We have not yet seen, it may be said, that an increase in the power of his Aztec believers, through faith in Huitzilopochtli, necessarily would cause an increase in their civilisation. But is it not true that increase of communal power does tend in itself to produce an increase of intellectual vigour, which leads in the direction of civilisation, quite apart from other considerations? And here—as, for the most part, under similar circumstances in other religions—there were numerous auxiliary forces tending in the same direction. The most remarkable of these forces was the illusion of Quetzalcoatl. “Quetzalcoatl,” says Spense, “stood for a worship which was eminently more advanced and humane than the degrading and sanguinary idolatry of which Huitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipoca were the prime objects.” Tezcatlipoca, it may be said, is to be regarded as the brother of Huitzilopochtli.

We are told that Quetzalcoatl was a god of

one of the older peoples of Anahuac, whose civilisation preceded that of the Aztecs. But his great interest does not lie merely in this semi-historic aboriginality. No doubt there were many such deities, whose very names are lost for ever. Why, then, was it that this god was selected to retain a prominent position in Mexican mythology? Surely it was because there could be evolved through him as a central figure by means of psychic illusion those civilising qualities which were weak in Huitzilopochtli and his kindred, and they could be brought thus to a speedier maturity. Huitzilopochtli gave the material strength to the empire of the Aztecs; Quetzalcoatl gave the spiritual qualities which form such a desirable complement to the ferocity of Huitzilopochtli.

It seems probable that the illusion of Quetzalcoatl was enabling evolution, so to say, to reach more quickly the goal for which it was striving already by the establishment of the worship of Huitzilopochtli. Quetzalcoatl was too mild a deity to lead alone a barbarous tribe amid barbarous surroundings up the path of civilisation. Therefore, necessarily, in Aztec civilisation Huitzilopochtli had to precede him. We may say that these two psychic illusions

produced Mexican civilisation. There are, as has been observed, any number of other deities in the Mexican mythology, but Huitzilopochtli and Quetzalcoatl, being the most prominent of them, may be taken as typical of all ; there is no need for us to consider the others in detail.

But the psychic illusion of Quetzalcoatl, as contrasted with that of Huitzilopochtli, really is of peculiar interest, for it places in convenient embryonic juxtaposition the two germs from which in combination a life of culture and high intelligence might have been formed—if Columbus had not discovered America. Of course, speculations on the probable outcome of Mexican civilisation, if it had been left to develop itself in isolation, are idle enough. There were too many forces at work, whose power we cannot estimate. By analogy we may presume that disillusion soon would have made itself felt, and we may imagine, from what we know of the aim of evolution, that by some means disillusion would have proved especially deadly to Huitzilopochtli and his blood-stained compeers, because, in the meanwhile, they would have completed for the time their material task of making the Aztec empire practically invincible among its neigh-

bours. Then Quetzalcoatl, the culture-deity, might have become the leading god and have produced a brief period of real civilisation. But without the material support of Huitzilopochtli, Quetzalcoatl probably would have fallen soon—if, indeed, he could have escaped the contagion of that disillusion which killed Huitzilopochtli. Then the whole culture would have slipped back to barbarism. But barbarism with a difference, barbarism with a potentiality of a new and greater growth—just as there was potentiality in the barbarism of the ruined and disillusioned Roman empire, a potentiality which has given us the civilisation of Christendom to-day.

But to return to Quetzalcoatl. There is quite a close analogy between him and Apollo. Both were sun-gods ; both were culture-gods. Also Apollo, as we noticed above, was not a true Roman deity, but an Hellenic deity, and rose to power in Rome after the indigenous Roman deities had finished their task of giving to Rome her commanding material position in Latium and Italy : similarly Quetzalcoatl was not a true Aztec deity, but seems rather to have been waiting to expand his influence until Huitzilopochtli had finished his work of making the Aztecs brave and hardy enough to

defy all resistance. Of course the analogy must not be pressed too far: the introduction of the Hellenic Apollo into Italy was in no way comparable to the apparent pre-Aztec dominance of Quetzalcoatl in Anahuac. But surely it is worthy of note that, in the two adolescent civilisations so widely sundered by the ocean, we find the primitive dominance of the psychic illusions in such gods as Mars and Huitzilopochtli, while, under their protection as it were, the illusions of extraneous culture-deities, Apollo and Quetzalcoatl, were strengthening their own hold upon the minds of men.

The dominance of Quetzalcoatl in Anahuac, though it was very far from being an absolute sovereignty over the intellects of the inhabitants, was not without influence. We can see this in the artistic craftsmanship of the Aztecs. Here, as usual, a comparatively high artistic power is coupled with polytheistic worship—that is a combination that recurs too often to be accidental.

The priests undoubtedly were the most highly cultured class in Anahuac. We may find a similar state of affairs, indeed, in any adolescent condition of society anywhere; for the priest is brought more continuously under

the influence of psychic illusion than the layman: we do not find it so often after the civilisation of a community is reaching maturity; for the tide of disillusion by that time often has set in among the priesthood when we cannot detect its existence elsewhere. The priests of Anahuac, also, were very numerous, a fact that points to a widespread complete acceptance of psychic illusions. Consequently the whole educational system of Anahuac was in their hands, just as the educational system of Europe was in the hands of the Catholic priesthood during the Middle Ages and the period of the Catholic civilisation. Here, too, then, we may note the instructive analogy by which evolution assists the growth of psychic illusion in secondary ways, by establishing such systems of sacerdotal education.

The priests had reached quite a high level of intelligence—their astronomical knowledge was advanced and exact, so that their calendar would only err by one day in five hundred years (*Prescott: Conquest of Mexico*, book i. chap. iv.). Surprise often is felt that such knowledge, implying a not inconsiderable refinement, should be found in conjunction with what seem to us to be the diabolic cruelty

and sanguinary horrors of human sacrifices and cannibalistic feasts. But is such surprise justifiable? After all, the most horrible cruelties were perpetrated in Europe under the Inquisition by men who at the very same time were rejoicing in all the glories of the Catholic civilisation. It seems rather that our modern unfailing sensibility in such matters largely is an outcome of Protestantism. But, if we remember that the principles of evolution are not affected in the slightest degree by sentimental notions—how strong are the animistic ideas in us which make it so easy to forget that at times!—we may realise that cruelty and cannibalism might be used incidentally by evolution, just as much as other practices that seem to us under modern influences to be virtuous or immoral, in order to strengthen psychic illusion and thus promote civilisation, quite apart from any personal notions we may have as to their virtue or their immorality. We know that Nature can be utterly cruel: we can see that in any country walk we may take: but it would be the idlest folly to say on that account that Nature is damnable. Our feelings in such matters have been evolved, for some reason or other, into a condition that clashes continually with the proceedings of

Nature. So with regard to these Mexican sacrifices, damnable though they may seem to us, it does not follow that they are damnable from a natural point of view. The truth is that we cannot free ourselves here for a moment from our own psychic illusions, which tell us that cruelty is a form of vice. The illusion, no doubt, is a desirable one for us, for it is fixed with undeniable tenacity in our minds. It seems not to have been a desirable illusion at all times in all men: certainly it was not so in the evolution of Mexican civilisation at the period of the Spanish conquest. If we can accept this statement of the case, we can come to realise that what seems to us to be quite abominable cruelty may not be incompatible with a degree of social development that certainly may be called civilisation.

The civilisation which Pizarro found and destroyed in Peru, "although in many ways analogous to that of the Aztecs, was strangely dissimilar in some of its aspects" (*Spence: The Mythologies of Ancient Mexico and Peru*). There are ruins scattered through Peru which point clearly to some anterior civilisation in the same district—just as there are similar prehistoric ruins in Yucatan telling of pre-Aztec

civilisation. Of this earlier civilisation we know nothing. We may conjecture naturally enough that the Peruvian civilisation, which the Spaniards found in existence, was evolved from the disintegration of this older social advance.

The Peruvian civilisation of the sixteenth century of our era was theocratic. The emperor, the Inca, was looked upon as the divine representative of the sun. Psychic illusion thus had deified an ordinary man, so that the people unreservedly and generally accepted the belief in the ultimate difference between the Inca and themselves. The divinity of the Inca extended also to his kinsmen, though in a lesser degree. We have not here to consider the little-known details of the origin of this strange belief in the divinity of a living man. Let us try rather to see theoretically how such a psychic illusion would affect communally those who had faith in it. If the community clearly could gain by it, even such an utterly irrational illusion certainly could have been evolved. We are compelled here, as so often elsewhere, to study the effects, and from them to deduce the causes.

We may note first that the Peruvian empire, from its isolated position between the moun-

tains and the ocean, was quite remarkably secure from the danger of invasion. Consequently the evolution of Peruvian civilisation was directed towards internal improvements rather than towards means of external offence and defence. Thus no great war-god, like Huitzilopochtli, dominates Peruvian mythology, which at the time of the Spanish conquest happened to have been tending from an older polytheism towards a monotheism that sanctioned only a worship of the sun in the person of the Inca. We need not suppose that the Peruvians never had to fight for their empire, although they were not a distinctively warlike and aggressive people like the Aztecs. The illusion of the divinity of the Inca was sufficient in itself to give the necessary irrational stimulus. Still, the spirit of Peruvian evolution was curiously introspective at the period when it becomes known to us. The result of this is that the internal economy of Peruvian government has a special interest.

The political arrangements of Peru were very highly organised: indeed, psychic illusion seems to have been used here chiefly for the increase of the efficiency of their organisation. We may see that any psychic illusion—in Peru the illusion of the divinity of the Inca—which

tended to improve the internal economy of the State, would be favoured by evolution through the improved conditions of life which such illusions would bring about amongst those people who accepted it. Thus in the cultivation of the ground a highly organised society would compel people to labour with more effective diligence than an ill-organised society. This would increase the supply of food produced by the country. Thus the population of a highly organised society would increase in numbers owing to the increased means of livelihood resulting from the increased supply of food: for the numerical strength of a population varies with the increase and decrease of the food-supply. Thus the psychic illusion of the divinity of the Inca would tend to enlarge the population of Peru to a greater number than it would have reached otherwise. The empire of the Inca thus would gain greatly in power, as contrasted with savage and barbarous tribes round about.

However, these tribes, as we have noted above, were apparently neither sufficiently numerous nor sufficiently strong thus to affect conclusively the internal form of Peruvian economy. We must seek, then, an auxiliary internal cause: and this we find in the local

internal variations which must have become prominent in an empire so large and so mountainous as that of the Inca, especially where intercommunication, though apparently well arranged, was conducted entirely on foot, for the Peruvians had no beasts of burden. These local internal variations would tend to set one province of the empire above another—ultimately as the result of variations in the strength of the psychic illusion. The imperial organisation then would favour the district that varied advantageously—for the government, though stern, was fatherly—at the expense of the district which varied disadvantageously: and thus the local variations would tend always to increase the efficiency of the organising force behind the whole empire. On the other hand, the disfavour of an Americind government would be a drastic thing.

To manage such a highly organised State as Peru it was necessary that a very efficient body of men should be in control of the government. Such a body was found in the Inca caste, which possessed by birth the hereditary sanction of a divine origin; for it shared with the Inca himself the glory of an accepted racial descent from the sun. The efficient power here was founded directly upon psychic illusion.

The actual organisation of this remarkable form of government really was bureaucratic—bureaucratic without a bureau. It is quite instructive to observe that this was the form of political control evolved in a country that was peculiarly free from foreign invasion and the accidents of war. For a bureaucracy is the worst form of government conceivable for the management of war. Is that the reason why, with a general increase of pacific principles in Europe at the present time, the forms of European government all are tending to become more and more bureaucratic?

CONCLUSION

ACCORDING to the theory so feebly adumbrated in the preceding pages, we are living at the present time in a civilisation that is in direct relation to the Protestant form of Christianity. Our civilisation is the result of the religion that preceded it or synchronised with its earlier stages, just as we have seen that previous civilisations in Europe resulted from previous forms of psychic illusion. The Hellenic culture was the outcome of faith in the religion of Hellas, the Roman culture the outcome of faith in the Hellenised religion of Rome, the Catholic culture of the Renaissance the outcome of faith in the Catholic form of Christianity ; similarly our modern civilisation in England is the outcome of faith in the Protestant form of Christianity. What, then, is to be the outcome of the future?

There is a charm in prophecy because, if we make the realisation sufficiently distant, we cannot be proved to be wrong by facts that

defeat the prognostication. The whole question of the future history of civilisation is indeed so complex that the problem is in a sense insoluble—insoluble, that is, if we seek to enter into details ; it is only in the vaguest of generalities that we can hope to plot out the course of the future.

It is evident in this matter of prophecy that we ought first to try to detect in what direction the lines of progress have been leading in the past ; only then can we hope to discover the direction that they are likely to take in the coming time. It seems, then, most essential to find out upon what general principle civilisation has been evolved. Such a principle must exist, if only we can detect it, because all Nature works under definite laws which cannot be broken. If civilisation has been evolved up to the present time upon a certain principle, it will continue to be evolved upon the same principle as long as humanity possesses any kind of culture that can be called civilisation. The attempt has been made in the previous pages of this book to show that the civilisations of Western Europe and other localities have resulted from certain psychic illusions which have dominated the minds of men from time to time, and to which we give

the name of religion. If this be true, if religion be the cause of civilisation, it follows that it is in the study of religion that we must hope to find the guiding lines which will show us whither our civilisation is taking us. As other periods of civilisation have grown, have reached a climax, and have then declined, so too our present civilisation must surely decline when it has lost the driving force that has raised it to its greatest possible height. There seems to be no sufficient reason to suppose that our present civilisation is different in kind from earlier civilisations. It is easy to look in a complacent way at the wonders of civilised life around us, and to point out particular facts that appear to foreshadow a permanent solidarity in the present state of human culture; but, if we agree that the source of fuel for the engine is coming to an end, we cannot but see that the end of the working power of the engine is not far off; and that is quite independent of the fact that the present horse-power of the engine is higher than ever.

The question, then, seems to simplify itself. Is the psychic illusion of Protestantism,* or, rather, is the psychic illusion of Christianity, a living, growing force in the minds of men? Or is it a spent or moribund force? As we

answer that alternative so it seems we must answer the question of the future of European civilisation.

Two points at once occur to the mind.

The universality of modern civilisation, spread practically over all the world, makes its position different from that of any former civilisation. But does it indeed make so much difference? Surely a quantitative distinction of this kind can never make that **qualitative** distinction which is implied in the statement. A quantitative distinction may lead to a greatly protracted delay in the course of dissolution, but it cannot *per se* become the qualitative distinction which alone could alter dissolution into a rejuvenated growth. The carcass of an elephant will take longer to decay than the carcass of a mouse, but the process is the same, and the final result is the same. Quantity and quality are in different planes; at the most they can affect each other only accidentally, not essentially. The conclusion surely must be that increased size does not make for real permanence in our civilisation, but rather for a protraction of the period of decadence, and only for that. This conclusion is very different from that reached by many acute thinkers from whom it is rash to differ. But

even the paltry thoughts of a poor thinker, such as are given here to the reader, may have a value if they goad greater minds into taking the trouble of crushing them.

The second point which occurs in this connection is of a different nature, qualitative rather than quantitative. Even if psychic illusion has been the exciting cause of civilisation, or an exciting cause, cannot civilisation come to occupy such a position that it no longer has need of this cause to enable it to retain the position to which it has attained? This is really a much more subtle objection because it rests upon a hypothesis which, evidently, we are unable either to verify or to refute. We do not know that we have attained or are attaining to such a position; it is true, also, that we do not know that such a position is unattainable. The answer to this question, then, can rest only upon probabilities. Ultimately it appears that it can rest only upon the historical analysis of earlier civilisations. If earlier civilisations can be shown to have come into existence, and, having reached a climax, to have entered upon a period of decadence, which always has been arrested only by the power of a new psychic illusion, is there not a probability that our present civilisation, in

the same way, having reached its climax, must enter upon a period of decadence, which only can be arrested by the establishment of a new psychic illusion? Our present theory can give no further answer to the question. To the present writer personally it seems that the answer implied must be accepted, that the only hope of arresting the inevitable decadence is ✓ the establishment of a new psychic illusion, which must be of such a kind that it can sway the minds of men with the practical universality of the previous great psychic illusions.

This raises the further question of the nature of this potential psychic illusion of the future. One is inclined to think that the new illusion cannot be yet another form of Christianity; ✓ it hardly appears conceivable that any new version of the Christian faith can come to dominate the modern civilised world with the unquestioned sway which is demanded. It seems, too, that the new religion must be founded on irrationality, so that rational self-seeking motives may have the least possible influence upon conduct. In order to reach this condition our present civilisation must enter upon a long period of decadence to reduce the present intellectuality to a level at

which men can accept the irrational universally and unreservedly.

Analogy would incline us to localise the new religion on the outskirts of the Christian civilisation, and therefore necessarily in Asia or Africa. The spirit of evolution will have no sentimental prejudices about the colour of skin. Apparently we should exclude from our choice of probable localities any non-Christian countries that have accepted the Christian civilisation, and have thus been Christianised in everything but nominal faith.

As to the date of the beginning of the Protestant disillusion and decadence, or again as to the date of the coming of the new religion, men can say nothing with certainty until they look back upon the Christian civilisation as we look back upon the Olympian civilisation. That they will look back so, analogy seems to leave no doubt. Even as we look back from the height of our civilisation to Greece and Rome, so they will look back to us from some far greater height which we cannot even dimly foreshadow.

✓ It is important for us to try to realise that civilisation is a natural growth, not the artificial work of a personal deity ; it is natural just as the specific growth of the human animal is

natural. Civilisation represents the specific variation by which humanity, at any time, in any place, has secured the superior variant strain through which it has been evolved into a position higher than that occupied by those who did not secure such a variant. That the variation is mental, rather than physical, makes no difference to the reality of its subjection to natural laws; for brains are subject to the same evolutionary laws as the rest of our animal nature.

It is easy to neglect that truth, to think of thought as if it had some sort of independent reality. There is no evidence to show that intellectual progress is not evolved on the same general principles as corporal progress. But thought has difficulty in theorising upon thought, civilisation has difficulty in theorising upon civilisation; for one is misled easily into mistaking unimportant particularities for important generalities. We see shadow-figures mingling with real figures, and it is difficult to distinguish shadow from reality; for often they are much alike. But if we follow a shadow, keep it under constant observation even for no very long time, we find that it becomes attenuated, and at last is lost in the darkness. It is not so when we follow reality.

Reality cannot be lost if we keep our gaze fixed upon it.

Well, then, if our theory is false, it melts away like a shadow, and is seen no more. But if it is true, it cannot be lost to sight; it only waits for him who surely will come—and may he come soon—to turn upon it the light of knowledge.

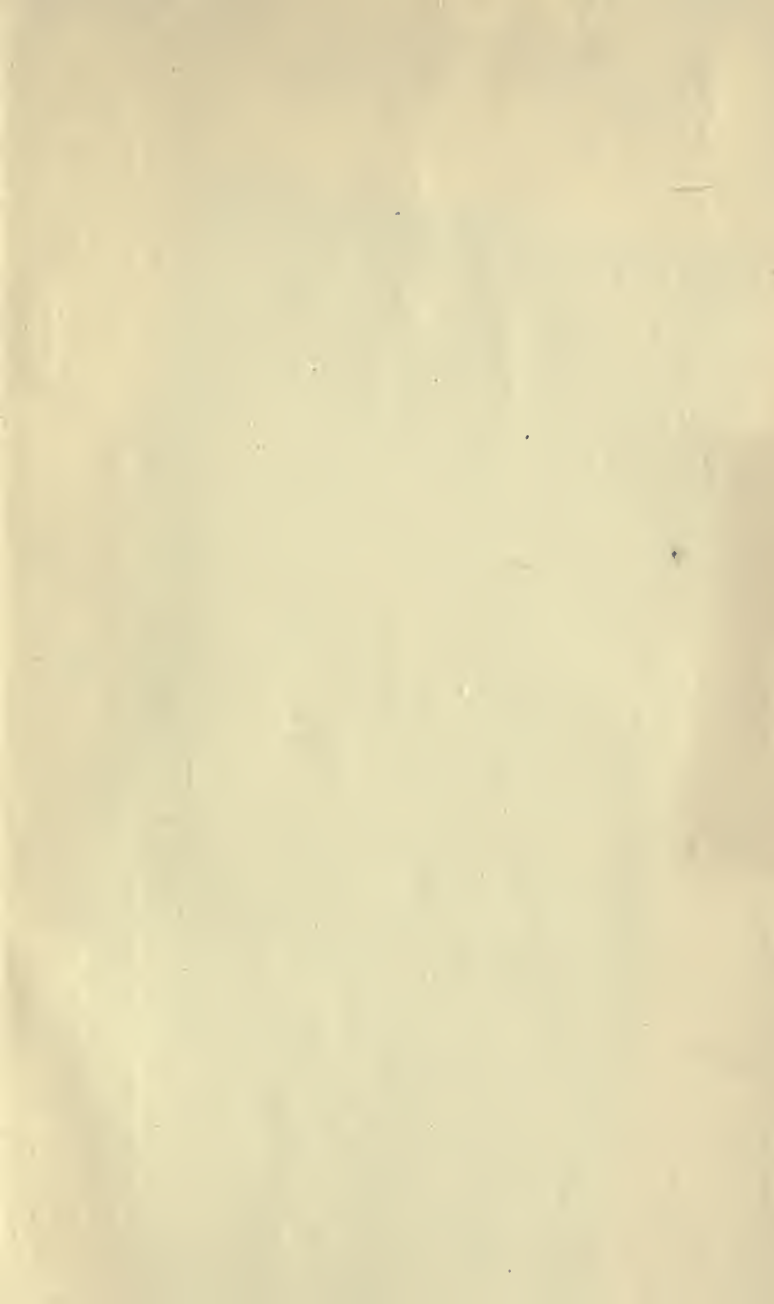
But at any rate in this way we can see dimly a solution to the problem which must occur both to the religious man and to the agnostic, the problem of the practical universality of religious feelings and beliefs throughout the past history of mankind. The Christian must wonder at the widespread acceptance of faiths which he holds to be untrue, must wonder that his God has permitted this vast extension and dominance of error. The agnostic, too, must marvel at the completeness of the sway which religion in its various forms has held over the minds of men. The belief, indeed, in the continuance of the life of the soul after death has become by secular insistence upon its truth a difficult thing to deny. But if religion is taken to have been evolved in order that human progress in civilisation might be evolved, the difficulty finds a solution. Religious belief becomes the stepping-stone by means of which animality advances to humanity.

Without doubt it is a difficult matter to study our personal religion from an impersonal point of view. Yet evidently an explanation is demanded, both by Christian and non-Christian, of the universality of various forms of faith. If religion, apart from any substratum of literal truth in its dogmas, has evolved itself as a means to the evolution of that higher mentality which finds its expression in civilisation, it is evident that its universality finds an explanation in our theory that is quasi-biological.

No advance in a biological evolutionary process can be final. On the contrary, it is essential that such advance lead either to a further advance or to retrogression. But the advance may be indirect, the retrogression direct. It seems to follow here from what has been said that civilisation, as we find it around us now, must soon enter upon a course where movement will be directly retrogressive, but also upon a course wherein some indirect path will be found leading ultimately to an advance far beyond the point we have reached to-day.

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